United Nations A/62/PV.15

General Assembly

Sixty-second session

Official Records

15th plenary meeting
Tuesday, 2 October 2007, 3 p.m.
New York

President: Mr. Kerim ..... (The former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia)

The meeting was called to order at 3.10 p.m.

Agenda item 8 (*continued*)

General debate

The President: I give the floor to His Excellency Mr. Brent Symonette, Deputy Prime Minister and Minister for Foreign Affairs of the Commonwealth of the Bahamas.

Mr. Symonette (Bahamas): I am proud to address this body as the representative of the Government of the Bahamas. We are committed to achieving a sense of security, well-being, pride and prosperity for the people of the Bahamas. We look forward to working with fellow Member States towards securing the same opportunities and freedoms for all people.

On behalf of the Government and the people of the Commonwealth of the Bahamas, I congratulate you, Sir, on your election as President of the General Assembly at its sixty-second session. I also want to take this opportunity to pay tribute to your predecessor for her leadership and dedication and for so aptly guiding the work of the sixty-first session.

I would like to take this opportunity to extend congratulations to His Excellency Mr. Ban Ki-moon on his appointment as the eighth Secretary-General of the Organization. My Government is confident that, given Secretary-General Ban's experience and diplomatic skills, he will aptly guide the Organization in facing its challenges.

Let me take this opportunity to commend the General Assembly's adoption of the historic resolution 61/19, on the two-hundredth anniversary of the abolition of the trans-Atlantic slave trade and on the commemoration of the International Day held on 25 March of this year. The Bahamas, where the majority of our people are proud descendents of freed slaves, is participating at both the national and the regional levels in a number of commemorative activities. We fully support the project aimed at erecting a permanent memorial at the United Nations in commemoration of that shameful period in the history of our world.

At a time when the international community is engaged in serious reflections regarding the history and consequences of slavery and the slave trade, the Bahamas wishes to recognize Haiti as the only country to liberate itself from slavery and for the inspiration this provided to the international campaign against slavery.

Since modern forms of slavery still exist and since many people continue to be held in servitude, we must not relent in our resolve until everyone is able to enjoy and exercise the freedoms which this Organization has worked so diligently to recognize, uphold and defend.

Despite Haiti's proud history, challenges have beset our neighbour for generations. Haiti's return to democratic order last year was especially welcomed, and we celebrate the strides Haiti is making along the difficult and arduous road to peace, security and

This record contains the text of speeches delivered in English and of the interpretation of speeches delivered in the other languages. Corrections should be submitted to the original languages only. They should be incorporated in a copy of the record and sent under the signature of a member of the delegation concerned to the Chief of the Verbatim Reporting Service, room C-154A. Corrections will be issued after the end of the session in a consolidated corrigendum.

07-52434 (E)

development. We heartily commend President Préval and his Administration for their stewardship of this demanding process. At the same time, we also commend the Organization of American States for its unstinting support for the people of Haiti.

The United Nations Mission in Haiti continues to play a vital role in this process, and the Bahamas supports the call for that mission to be maintained so as to consolidate the gains made to date and thus place our Caribbean Community (CARICOM) sister country on a firm and lasting path to sustainable development, peace, security and democracy. We urge the international community to support the people of Haiti in that quest.

As Haiti lies merely 90 miles from the southern shores of the Bahamas, its economic and political situation can and does have very tangible repercussions for us all. Each year, the Bahamas is challenged by the arrival of thousands of illegal migrants from Haiti who, by perilous means, journey to our shores in search of a better way of life. Ensuring that justice and democracy prevail in Haiti, therefore, has a positive impact not only on the people of Haiti, but also on the Bahamas and indeed the entire region.

The role of the United Nations in matters of sustainable development is crucial, particularly with regard to challenges demanding a truly global response — challenges such as climate change. We commend the Secretary-General for bringing greater focus to the issue, with the convening of the high-level event on climate change last week, and are hopeful that the event will provide the necessary impetus for action when Member States meet in Bali later this year. The Conference of the Parties to the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change is indeed the appropriate forum for negotiations on a post-Kyoto agreement, and the political will demonstrated during the Secretary-General's recent high-level event should only bring closer focus to an agreed agenda in that regard.

For small island developing States and archipelagos like the Bahamas, climate change is a matter of critical importance. For many of us it is not just a matter of economics, but a matter of survival, as 80 per cent of our landmass is within five feet of mean sea level; even a one-degree rise in atmospheric temperature can have devastating ecological effects. Climate change is particularly challenging with respect to the potential effects on our tourism industry, which is our main industry and which generates some 60 per cent of the Bahamas's gross domestic product. We therefore cannot overemphasize the need for an ambitious mitigation agenda for the post-Kyoto regime. Recent studies have shown that there are many mitigation options available, and many of them are win-win. We must therefore, with unwavering commitment, explore these options in an open and inclusive environment.

For countries like the Bahamas, resources for adaptation are also essential. However, even access to existing funds can prove difficult given the country's gross national income. It is therefore vital that the relevant financial instruments and mechanisms be fully operationalized and/or improved so that they become more accessible and better address the peculiar circumstances and special needs of different countries. Further, there is a need for greater international cooperation with respect to the development of new technologies, as well as the transfer of such technologies in support of the sustainable development of small island developing States.

We in the Caribbean region must prepare for the possibility of continued increases in the incidence of natural hazards such as hurricanes, floods and earthquakes. Whether it is through assistance with hazard mapping and vulnerability assessment standardization or through the implementation of early warning systems, international cooperation has an important role to play in complementing national efforts to reduce vulnerability to natural disasters.

One step taken by the Caribbean region was the establishment of the Caribbean Catastrophic Risk Insurance Facility under the aegis of the World Bank. We would like to thank those countries who have contributed to the fund. The Bahamas continues to press for the execution of the Mauritius Strategy for the Further Implementation of the Programme of Action for the Sustainable Development of Small Island Developing States, as well as of complementary frameworks such as the Johannesburg Plan of Implementation and the Hyogo Framework for Action. The time has come to reassess our collective response to these issues and to renew our efforts in support of sustainable development.

Adequate financial resources are essential in the implementation of the wider internationally agreed

development goals. Consideration of issues surrounding the follow-up to the International Conference on Financing for Development is particularly significant this year, as we prepare for the Follow-up International Conference on Financing for Development to Review the Implementation of the Monterrey Consensus, to be held in Doha next year. The Bahamas would wish for the deliberations of the upcoming High-level Dialogue, as well as the 2008 meeting of the Economic and Social Council with the Bretton Woods institutions, the World Trade Organization (WTO) and the United Nations Conference on Trade and Development (UNCTAD), to provide practical input into, and contribute to the success of that most important review conference.

The issue of strengthening the voice and participation of developing nations in international economic decision- making and norm-setting is especially important to the Bahamas. There is a definite need for concrete, realistic proposals to ensure the effective, permanent representation of developing countries, particularly small developing countries, not only in the Bretton Woods institutions and the WTO but also in the other international economic and financial institutions, such as the Financial Stability Forum, the Financial Action Task Force and the Basel Committee.

The Bahamas welcomes the positive development in the area of international cooperation in tax matters, namely, the establishment of the Committee of Experts on International Cooperation in Tax Matters within the Economic and Social Council. The establishment of that Committee ensures that the interests of small developing States Members of the United Nations with different tax regimes will be factored into discussions and recommendations aimed at adopting mutually agreed standards that do not unduly favour the wealthy nations at the expense of meaningful development in States and jurisdictions not members of the Organization for Economic Cooperation and Development.

We have reached the halfway mark in the time frame we set ourselves in the Millennium Development Goals (MDGs) to undertake concrete steps by the year 2015 to address not only the economic and environmental challenges plaguing the international community and the Organization, but various social ills as well. In so doing, we gave those who are less fortunate hope for a better and more equitable world.

The MDG Report 2007 demonstrates that progress has been achieved in the reduction of the proportion of people living in poverty, the reduction of child and maternal mortality rates and the increase of primary school enrolment levels. However, nearly 20 million children worldwide continue to be severely malnourished and suffer from various preventable diseases that will undoubtedly affect their survival and rob them of their full potential. Overall progress in achieving equal rights and the empowerment of women is also too slow. My Government regards effective and practical measures to address poverty and the enhancement of educational partnerships to facilitate the development of our human resources to impact accelerated change as critical issues.

HIV/AIDS remains a global threat to the development, progress and stability of our societies. If the goal of universal access to comprehensive prevention, treatment, care and support by 2010 is to be achieved, commitments entered into in the 2001 Declaration of Commitment on HIV/AIDS and the 2006 Political Declaration on HIV/AIDS must be implemented. The necessary financial and technical support to developing countries must be provided to help bridge the gap and foster a more comprehensive and sustainable global response to this pandemic.

Equally important is the fact that 63 per cent of deaths worldwide are attributable to non-communicable diseases resulting from factors such as obesity, high cholesterol, high blood sugar, high blood pressure, tobacco use, physical inactivity, unhealthy diet and alcohol abuse. At a recent summit of CARICOM heads of Government, a number of action steps were identified. The Governments have agreed to establish, by mid-2008, comprehensive plans for the screening and management of chronic diseases and risk factors, so that, by 2012, 80 per cent of people in the Caribbean region with non-communicable diseases would receive quality care and have access to preventive education based on regional guidelines.

In spite of the efforts of various entities and the existence of United Nations conventions to protect the rights of women and children, discrimination and violence against women and children persist throughout the world. In an effort to better address this problem, the Bahamas has drafted a new Child Protective Act and a Domestic Violence Protection Order to enhance and provide greater protection to these vulnerable groups.

Last year the United Nations Global Counter-Terrorism Strategy (resolution 60/288) was adopted, marking an important step towards the elaboration of a counter-terrorism convention. The Bahamas continues to condemn terrorism and recognizes that while there may be instances when terrorism and criminal activities converge, the methodologies used to combat each of them are very different. Based on its own risk assessment, therefore, each Government must determine the level of resources that can be adopted and applied to counter-terrorism measures, particularly given the emphasis that the Strategy also places on addressing and preventing the conditions conducive to the spread of terrorism.

In prescribing counter-terrorism measures, care must be taken by the international community to preserve the tenet of due process. Care must also be taken to guard against the creation of disincentives that negatively impact countries with service-based economies. With respect to counter-terrorism measures, the Bahamas has adopted new legislation, ratified additional anti-terrorism conventions, increased security of large facilities, airports, docks and harbours developed a counter-terrorism intelligence network and provided anti-terrorism training for the police. Needless to say, such initiatives present a challenge and divert resources from our economic development.

The Bahamas reaffirms its commitment to fulfil its obligations to major international drug and counter-terrorism conventions and continues to support the concept of the expansion of the membership of the Security Council. The Bahamas maintains, however, that such expansion of the Security Council will not greatly increase the chances for our particular countries, such as the Bahamas.

While it is incumbent on Member States to fulfil their obligations that come with membership, the Organization must put in place effective management tools and create a system that would eliminate overspending and waste and create more fiscal accountability and proper oversight.

The Bahamas values the role of the United Nations as the custodian of the interests of the world's people, in particular the poor and the vulnerable. The Bahamas continues to believe that the United Nations Charter constitutes a viable and firm foundation on which the Organization can balance and achieve its objectives: to maintain international peace and security and, equally important, to promote development and economic and social progress.

The President: I now call on His Excellency Mr. Kenneth Baugh, Deputy Prime Minister and Minister for Foreign Affairs and Trade of Jamaica.

Mr. Baugh (Jamaica): It is my great pleasure, Sir, to extend to you warmest and most sincere congratulations on your assumption of the presidency of the General Assembly. The Jamaican delegation is confident that much will be accomplished during the sixty-second session under your able leadership. You can be assured of the support of the Jamaican delegation in that endeavour.

To your predecessor, Her Excellency Sheikha Haya Rashed Al-Khalifa, the Jamaican delegation extends its appreciation for her unstinting efforts in advancing the work of the General Assembly during its sixty-first session.

Jamaica also wishes to pay tribute to the laudable efforts of Secretary-General Ban Ki-moon who, since his assumption of office in January of this year, has moved forward in earnest to enhance the process of reform of the United Nations.

I am deeply honoured to be addressing the General Assembly at its sixty-second session on behalf of my country, Jamaica. The time has come to reassess our collective response to these issues and to renew our efforts in support of sustainable development.

Adequate financial resources are essential in the implementation of the wider internationally agreed development goals. Consideration of issues surrounding the follow-up to the International Conference on Financing for Development is particularly significant this year, as we prepare for the Follow-up International Conference on Financing for Development to Review the Implementation of the Monterrey Consensus, to be held in Doha next year. The Bahamas would wish for the deliberations of the upcoming High-level Dialogue, as well as the 2008 meeting of the Economic and Social Council with the Bretton Woods institutions, the World Trade Organization (WTO) and the United Nations Conference on Trade and Development (UNCTAD), to provide practical input into, and contribute to the success of that most important review conference.

The issue of strengthening the voice and participation of developing nations in international

economic decision-making and norm-setting is especially important to the Bahamas. There is a definite need for concrete, realistic proposals to ensure the effective, permanent representation of developing countries, particularly small developing countries, not only in the Bretton Woods institutions and the WTO but also in the other international economic and financial institutions, such as the Financial Stability Forum, the Financial Action Task Force and the Basel Committee.

The Bahamas welcomes the positive development in the area of international cooperation in tax matters, namely, the establishment of the Committee of Experts on International Cooperation in Tax Matters within the Economic and Social Council. The establishment of that Committee ensures that the interests of small developing States Members of the United Nations with different tax regimes will be factored into discussions and recommendations aimed at adopting mutually agreed standards that do not unduly favour the wealthy nations at the expense of meaningful development in States and jurisdictions not members of the Organization for Economic Cooperation and Development.

We have reached the halfway mark in the time frame we set ourselves in the Millennium Development Goals (MDGs) to undertake concrete steps by the year 2015 to address not only the economic and environmental challenges plaguing the international community and the Organization, but various social ills as well. In so doing, we gave those who are less fortunate hope for a better and more equitable world.

The MDG Report 2007 demonstrates that progress has been achieved in the reduction of the proportion of people living in poverty, the reduction of child and maternal mortality rates and the increase of primary school enrolment levels. However, nearly 20 million children worldwide continue to be severely malnourished and suffer from various preventable diseases that will undoubtedly affect their survival and rob them of their full potential. Overall progress in achieving equal rights and the empowerment of women is also too slow. My Government regards effective and practical measures to address poverty and the enhancement of educational partnerships to facilitate the development of our human resources to impact accelerated change as critical issues.

HIV/AIDS remains a global threat to the development, progress and stability of our societies. If the goal of universal access to comprehensive prevention, treatment, care and support by 2010 is to be achieved, commitments entered into in the 2001 Declaration of Commitment on HIV/AIDS and the 2006 Political Declaration on HIV/AIDS must be implemented. The necessary financial and technical support to developing countries must be provided to help bridge the gap and foster a more comprehensive and sustainable global response to this pandemic.

Equally important is the fact that 63 per cent of deaths worldwide are attributable to non-communicable diseases resulting from factors such as obesity, high cholesterol, high blood sugar, high blood pressure, tobacco use, physical inactivity, unhealthy diet and alcohol abuse. At a recent summit of CARICOM heads of Government, a number of action steps were identified. The Governments have agreed to establish, by mid-2008, comprehensive plans for the screening and management of chronic diseases and risk factors, so that, by 2012, 80 per cent of people in the Caribbean region with non-communicable diseases would receive quality care and have access to preventive education based on regional guidelines.

In spite of the efforts of various entities and the existence of United Nations conventions to protect the rights of women and children, discrimination and violence against women and children persist throughout the world. In an effort to better address this problem, the Bahamas has drafted a new Child Protective Act and a Domestic Violence Protection Order to enhance and provide greater protection to these vulnerable groups.

Last year the United Nations Global Counter-Terrorism Strategy (resolution 60/288) was adopted, marking an important step towards the elaboration of a counter-terrorism convention. The Bahamas continues to condemn terrorism and recognizes that while there may be instances when terrorism and criminal activities converge, the methodologies used to combat each of them are very different. Based on its own risk assessment, therefore, each Government must determine the level of resources that can be adopted and applied to counter-terrorism measures, particularly given the emphasis that the Strategy also places on addressing and preventing the conditions conducive to the spread of terrorism.

In prescribing counter-terrorism measures, care must be taken by the international community to preserve the tenet of due process. Care must also be taken to guard against the creation of disincentives that negatively impact countries with service-based economies. With respect to counter-terrorism measures, the Bahamas has adopted new legislation, ratified additional anti-terrorism conventions, increased security of large facilities, airports, docks and harbours developed a counter-terrorism intelligence network and provided anti-terrorism training for the police. Needless to say, such initiatives present a challenge and divert resources from our economic development.

The Bahamas reaffirms its commitment to fulfil its obligations to major international drug and counter-terrorism conventions and continues to support the concept of the expansion of the membership of the Security Council. The Bahamas maintains, however, that such expansion of the Security Council will not greatly increase the chances for our particular countries, such as the Bahamas.

While it is incumbent on Member States to fulfil their obligations that come with membership, the Organization must put in place effective management tools and create a system that would eliminate overspending and waste and create more fiscal accountability and proper oversight.

The Bahamas values the role of the United Nations as the custodian of the interests of the world's people, in particular the poor and the vulnerable. The Bahamas continues to believe that the United Nations Charter constitutes a viable and firm foundation on which the Organization can balance and achieve its objectives: to maintain international peace and security and, equally important, to promote development and economic and social progress.

The President: I now call on His Excellency Mr. Kenneth Baugh, Deputy Prime Minister and Minister for Foreign Affairs and Trade of Jamaica.

Mr. Baugh (Jamaica): It is my great pleasure, Sir, to extend to you warmest and most sincere congratulations on your assumption of the presidency of the General Assembly. The Jamaican delegation is confident that much will be accomplished during the sixty-second session under your able leadership. You can be assured of the support of the Jamaican delegation in that endeavour.

To your predecessor, Her Excellency Sheikha Haya Rashed Al-Khalifa, the Jamaican delegation extends its appreciation for her unstinting efforts in advancing the work of the General Assembly during its sixty-first session.

Jamaica also wishes to pay tribute to the laudable efforts of Secretary-General Ban Ki-moon who, since his assumption of office in January of this year, has moved forward in earnest to enhance the process of reform of the United Nations.

I am deeply honoured to be addressing the General Assembly at its sixty-second session on behalf of my country, Jamaica. Today, I especially restate my country's firm commitment to the ideals and principles of the United Nations and underscore Jamaica's strong support for multilateralism, which must underpin the core processes in the execution of the functions and responsibilities of the United Nations. In doing so, I am driven by our resolve for change, as well as by the need for unity and for the reinvigoration of the United Nations in order for it to effectively and efficiently achieve the fundamental purposes set out in its Charter.

As we begin this session, we must not lose sight of our strategic objectives and vision towards the maintenance of international peace and security; the development of friendly relations among nations; the achievement of international cooperation in the economic, social, cultural and humanitarian fields; and the promotion of human rights and fundamental freedoms.

Looking back at the record over the past year, it is disconcerting that the challenges we face at the global level have not seen much discernable change. From a security point of view, the world continues to be plagued by seemingly incessant and protracted conflicts, such as those in the Middle East, parts of Africa and elsewhere. Millions of innocent persons are the victims of civil strife or are displaced as a result of violence and armed conflict. Terrorism, transnational organized crime and the proliferation of weapons of mass destruction continue to threaten international peace and security.

From the economic and social perspective, we cannot escape the fact that we live in a world characterized by high levels of underdevelopment and social degradation — a world where too many people live in dehumanizing poverty. It is a world in which human security is being threatened by environmental

degradation. The experience of HIV/AIDS and the constant threat of new pandemics underscore our interconnectedness and interdependence, demanding universal cooperation and collective action.

All States, developed and developing, large and small, are vulnerable to those threats and must of necessity have a shared commitment to strengthening collective security and safeguarding world peace and security. No nation can address those challenges and threats entirely on its own. Sustained collective action and global cooperation are required to identify and shape a common vision and agreed objectives to deal with the complexities of our times. In recent years, we have renewed our commitment to the United Nations as the catalyst for effectively advancing the interests of our peoples in the areas of development, peace and security, and human rights.

Unquestionably, there have been pockets of success in global economic progress over the past decade. By and large, however, our commitments have not been matched by the desired implementation of the targets for meeting basic human needs, human security and sustainable development. It is clear that much more needs to be done if we are to achieve the development targets in the Millennium Development Goals (MDGs) by 2015.

The Government of Jamaica fully accepts that each country has the primary responsibility for setting development priorities through sound governance and policies. We believe that the goals that were solemnly agreed seven years ago are not overly ambitious and are still achievable. In that context, my Government is committed to taking further measures to pursue the objectives of the MDGs and other internationally agreed development goals. We are committed to providing the necessary framework that will promote social inclusion, enhance productive capacity and employment, and facilitate investment and sustained economic growth.

But many developing countries, such as Jamaica, cannot do it alone. The realization of the development agenda is dependent not only on our own domestic capabilities, but equally on the genuine commitment of all Member States to pursue a global partnership for development, which is at the core of the strategy for development. We believe, therefore, that it is imperative that we move beyond the simple reiteration of principles and translate commitments into action. We must give life to the aspirations embodied in the outcomes of international conferences on the basis of mutual responsibility and mutual accountability, with a fair expectation that obligations, as agreed, will be fully undertaken.

In all that we do, we must recognize that progress and uplifting the poor benefits all of us. It can mean the difference between conflict and stability, between hope and despair. As developing countries strive to put in place practical national development strategies, developed country partners must support those efforts through greater market access, debt relief, private capital flows, technological transfers and improved global economic governance. Jamaica therefore calls for renewed focus, as well as the necessary political will, to honour the commitments made for development, and urges the fulfilment of all obligations that we have collectively embraced so that we may effect real change in the lives of millions of impoverished people around the world.

A critical role in that process is official development assistance, including the fulfilment by developed countries of the official development assistance target of 0.7 per cent of gross national income. The High-Level Meeting on Financing for Development provides an opportunity to enhance collaboration with our partners towards achieving that goal.

The unique situation of middle-income developing countries, such as Jamaica, also requires special attention. That varied group of countries, with per capita gross domestic product spreading from $900 to $10,000, is by no means a homogeneous group and possesses its own particular vulnerabilities. Greater efforts must be made to address the needs of middle-income developing countries, in particular the high level of indebtedness that those countries face.

Globalization and economic liberalization have resulted in the increased exposure of developing countries to external economic forces over which they have little control. We should refuse to accept that globalization creates winners and losers. What we should strive for is a win-win and inclusive process in which the benefits and opportunities are more widely enjoyed across countries and regions.

An enabling international environment also requires a global trading system that is fair and equitable and that is conducive to development and

integration in the world economy. A continued cause of grave concern to Jamaica is therefore the current impasse in the negotiations in the Doha Development Round, in spite of commitments to work expeditiously towards implementing the development dimensions of the Doha work programme. We must summon the necessary political will to reignite trade negotiations, with the development agenda as the centrepiece of the discussions as we seek to integrate developing countries in the multilateral trading system.

It is important that the creation of a viable and equitable trade regime also recognize diversity in the levels of development and size of economies. A one-size-fits-all model disregards the complexities and unique circumstances of countries. Jamaica will therefore continue to insist that new trading arrangements take account of that differentiation, especially as it concerns small vulnerable economies. The principle of special and differential treatment seeks only to level the playing field and to give developing countries a fair chance to participate meaningfully in global trade. At the same time, we will also join other developing countries in pressing for the removal of support for agricultural products by certain developed countries as a precondition for further market access for such products.

We call for and join in continuous and concerted international efforts to fight the spread of communicable diseases, including HIV/AIDS, tuberculosis, malaria and others, particularly bearing in mind that they are all preventable. The global impact of AIDS has been particularly devastating. The high prevalence in many countries, especially in sub-Saharan Africa and the Caribbean, is cause for alarm. It should be noted that the pattern of high prevalence and high heterosexual transmission is strongly associated with poverty.

While noting the international response through the Joint United Nations Programme on HIV/AIDS (UNAIDS) and the Global Fund to Fight AIDS, Tuberculosis and Malaria, we stress the need for increased funding to help support developing countries to fight the pandemic. We are particularly concerned that the countries of the Caribbean, including Jamaica, are placed at a disadvantage in accessing the necessary funding to curtail the spread of the disease owing to their assigned middle-income status.

Implementing a global response to climate change must remain a priority as we seek consensus for combating global warming beyond 2012, when the Kyoto Protocol expires. As we prepare for the Conference of the Parties to the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change in Bali, Indonesia, we are encouraged that the recent High-Level Event on Climate Change and the General Assembly informal debate on climate change reinforced the urgency with which issues pertaining to environmental sustainability have to be tackled.

The principle of common but differentiated responsibility must be applied across the board. We are equally convinced that the international community must assist small island developing States in incorporating climate change adaptation and mitigation concerns in national sustainable development plans and assist them by improving access to environmentally sound technology related to climate change.

Jamaica and other countries in the Caribbean are all too familiar with the adverse effects of climate change and associated phenomena, including the rise in sea-level and the increase in the frequency and intensity of hurricanes and other weather events that threaten the sustainable development, livelihoods and the very existence of small island developing States. In my own country, the onslaught of Hurricane Dean on 19 August resulted in the loss of life and extensive damage to infrastructure, property and the agricultural sector, as well as in the loss of livelihood for many.

The threat of terrorism transcends boundaries and has had a devastating impact on the economic development of States, whether directly or indirectly. It is imperative that we negotiate and conclude a comprehensive convention against terrorism. We must also invigorate disarmament and non-proliferation efforts.

There is a need to comprehensively address the illicit trafficking in small arms and light weapons, which have the capacity to kill and maim thousands of people. Jamaica has first-hand experience of high levels of gun violence and the unwarranted burden it places on our social and economic system. We urge the international community to give priority attention to this menace, including through the creation of a legally binding instrument containing stricter controls on the illegal trade in small arms and ammunition. Likewise,

we support the proposal for the establishment of an arms trade treaty.

A major priority of the United Nations is not only winning the peace, but more importantly keeping and sustaining the peace. Jamaica fully supports the work of the Peacebuilding Commission, which earlier this year celebrated its first anniversary and whose groundbreaking work is assisting in post-conflict rehabilitation and reconstruction. As a member of the Commission, Jamaica looks forward to the continuation of the dialogue as we seek to build on the successes of the recent past, always mindful that the countries under consideration require swift action to implement priority projects as part of the rehabilitation and reconstruction process.

The Caribbean Community (CARICOM) continues to be seized of developments in Haiti. We reaffirm the importance of the continued engagement of the international community and, in this regard, welcome the renewal of the mandate of the United Nations Stabilization Mission in Haiti (MINUSTAH) to assist in the stabilization process. We also encourage support from the international community to meet the long-term social, economic and development needs of Haiti.

We must remain unwavering in our commitment to the promotion and protection of human rights and the rule of law. Much more needs to be done to ensure that the basic rights of individuals are universally protected and that transparent and accountable governance prevails at the local and international levels.

Jamaica is honoured to assume the Chairmanship of the Third Committee during the General Assembly at its sixty-second session, as part of our commitment to ensure that human rights are promoted and protected globally. In this regard, we are particularly keen to help guide the Committee's work in promoting and protecting the rights of marginalized and vulnerable groups. Jamaica recognizes the importance of the protection of the human rights of women, which is critical to the international processes aimed at achieving gender equality and the development of women.

Late last year a significant milestone was achieved with the adoption by the United Nations of the Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities with the distinction of being one of the most supported conventions at its opening for signature in March 2007. Jamaica is pleased to have been the first country to ratify the Convention and encourages others to accede to the Convention as a sign of their commitment to ensuring that the rights and dignity of the disabled are promoted and protected. We also welcome the adoption of the Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples.

The deteriorating humanitarian situation in Darfur remains a matter of grave concern and preoccupation of the international community. Jamaica therefore welcomes the recent unanimous adoption of Security Council resolution 1769 (2007) for the deployment of the joint African Union-United Nations Hybrid Operation in Darfur to the region. We are encouraged that by certain developments that indicate that this kind of cooperation has begun and urge that these efforts be intensified.

The process of reform of the United Nations seems prolonged and challenging, with little or no consensus in the various proposals put forward for improvements in the functioning of the United Nations and its main organs. We must redouble our efforts to revitalize the General Assembly, so that it can effectively carry out its role and responsibility as the chief deliberative and policy-making organ of the United Nations. We must also work towards a reformed Security Council that is more inclusive, more representative and more transparent.

This year marks the bicentenary of the abolition of the transatlantic slave trade. Member States of the Caribbean Community are heartened by the overwhelming solidarity of the international community in marking the event at the special commemorative meeting of the General Assembly in March and other activities during the course of the year to memorialize the victims of this egregious period in our history.

A significant element of the commemoration is a plan to honour the victims of the transatlantic slave trade and slavery, through the erection of a permanent memorial in the halls of the United Nations. We are grateful to Member States that have contributed or pledged towards the permanent memorial account that has been established and look forward to your further support and contributions towards the erection of the memorial.

We are 192 Member States; we have the fundamental tools and the required level of expertise to effectively address the major challenges facing us today. It is now clear that we must also have a steadfast will and a shared commitment towards a radical change from the existing mindset in favour of positive action, if the United Nations is to successfully respond to challenges, which continue to hamper the attainment of its objectives for peace and sustainable development.

In calling for radical change in the existing mindset and in the way we discourse and take actions on international issues, we should be guided by the purposes and principles of the Charter. A change in our mindset will require a rethinking on the part of all Member States as we seek to promote world peace and achieve economic and social development. It will also require a deep search in the conscience of all States as we seek to adhere to our obligations under international law with due regard for the collective will of the international community.

This radical change in the existing mindset will necessarily require us to be more responsible as Member States of a united Organization, more responsible as citizens of this one world and more focused on the shared responsibilities that come with our membership in the United Nations.

Let us not falter in our obligation to ensure that the Organization not only remains responsive to the vast array of concerns and demands of its diverse membership, but that it is able to do so without compromising the noble ideals and principles on which it was founded. This process begins with a conscious determination and political resolve to transform not only our modus operandi, but the thinking that informs it. Jamaica stands ready to play its part in this endeavour and calls upon all Member States to do likewise.

The President: I now call on His Excellency Mr. Ahmad Allam-Mi, Minister for Foreign Affairs and African Integration of the Republic of Chad.

Mr. Allam-Mi (Chad) (*spoke in French*): Please accept our warm congratulations, Sir, on your well-deserved election to the presidency of our Assembly. We are convinced that you possess all the necessary qualities for the sound direction of our work. My country assures you of its support as you carry out your important task.

We also wish to convey our gratitude to your predecessor, Sheikha Haya Rashed Al-Khalifa, for the efficiency with which she guided the work of our sixty-first session. I also wish to pay a well-deserved tribute to our Secretary-General, His Excellency Mr. Ban Ki-moon, who has been constantly playing a significant role since his election in advancing the ideals of our Organization.

One important event has caught the attention of Chad. On 25 September, the Security Council adopted unanimously resolution 1778 (2007) authorizing an international operation on the eastern border of Chad and the north-east border of the Central African Republic. That operation — and we should stress the defensive nature of its mandate: the protection of refugees, displaced persons, civilian populations and humanitarian workers — is something that in Chad we are very satisfied to see since it will lighten the heavy burden borne thus far by the Chadian local police since the beginning of the crisis in Darfur.

Chad also wishes to thank the Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees and the friendly countries who have supported the local Chadian police. At this point, I wish also to pay tribute to their courage and dedication because they did their best in order to accomplish their sensitive and dangerous mission.

The new operation will be able to rely on the availability and cooperation of Chadian authorities. We venture to hope that it will stabilize and create conditions for the reconstruction of the eastern part of our country, which has been destroyed by incursions of the Janjaweed militias from the Sudan and other armed groups from Darfur. It will also especially require that the Chadian displaced persons, who have so far been neglected by the international community, be reinstalled in their original localities.

Above and beyond our hopes of stabilization and reconstruction in the eastern part of our country, we have the legitimate hope that the Darfur crisis will end. More than any country, Chad would gain by that, especially since our populations in the eastern part of Chad have been the victims of the crisis as often if not more than our sister populations of the Sudan in Darfur. For that reason, our country has tirelessly endeavoured to restore peace and security to Darfur. In that regard, no one can ignore the extremely important role played by the President of the Republic, His

Excellency Mr. Idriss Deby Itmo, in supporting the peacekeeping measures taken by the international community.

The Republic of Chad has no intention of departing from that course. For that reason we will make the fullest possible contribution to the success of the resumed inter-Sudanese peace talks on Darfur that are scheduled for Tripoli on 27 October. We have also contributed to the preparation of the peace talks through our participation in meetings bringing together the non-signatory movements of the Abuja Peace Agreement, including meetings at Abeche in Chad, at Asmara in Eritrea, at Tripoli in the Libyan Arab Jamahiriya and at Arusha in Tanzania, as well as the last Seminar of N'Djaména in Chad — all of which has taken place under the auspices of the joint mediation of the United Nations and the African Union.

We have just underscored our resolve to work for peace in Darfur in particular, and of course, in the Sudan in general, because that work is in the interest of peace and security in the subregion of Central Africa in general and of Chad in particular. We all need peace among our neighbours in order to fend off any risk to the stabilization of our countries and to continue, guided by the inspiration of His Excellency Mr. Idriss Deby Itmo, President of the Republic and Head of State, to build upon the democratic process that our country has been committed to since 1990, as well as to ensure the peace, security and social well-being of the Chadian people.

In that regard, we should highlight that, since last year, Chadian political life has witnessed some positive developments. A number of military and political high officials of the Chadian rebellion have had their legal rights restored, individually or in small groups or with their entire organization.

On 4 March 2007, a new Government was formed under the leadership of one of the well known figures of the political opposition to the presidential majority — Prime Minister Sem Nouradine Delwa Kassire Koumakoye. Moreover, the new Government has responded to the expectations of the opposition by deciding to postpone the legislative and communal elections in order to wait for the conclusions of a political dialogue begun under the auspices of the European Union. That dialogue is aimed at strengthening the rule of law and the democratic process by organizing the elections under conditions that are acceptable to all actors in our political life, or at least by the greater majority, which is devoted to the peaceful settlement of political conflicts and has renounced recourse to weapons and anti-constitutional changes.

That political dialogue led to the signing of a political agreement on 13 August 2007. The signing of that important agreement by the parties of the governmental majority and the democratic opposition clearly stems from the constant resolve of the President of the Republic, His Excellency Mr. Idriss Deby Itmo, to establish a peaceful political life in the country.

Furthermore, we wish also to warmly thank our development partners, in particular the European Union, whose valuable assistance enabled us to produce the agreement that we consider historic. That new fact in Chad's political life has enabled us to note with great satisfaction that a number of political exiles have returned or intend to return without delay to the country. We owe that situation to the facilitation of the heads of State who are friends of Chad and we mention in particular His Excellency El Hadj Omar Bongo Ondimba of Gabon and His Excellency Mr. Boni Yayi of Benin. In addition to the notable progress with the democratic opposition and the Chadian political exiles we note that we are looking forward — with the support of the guide to the Libyan revolution and the mediator of the Community of Sahelo-Saharan States (CEN-SAD), our brother Muammar Al-Qadhafi — to continuing with the useful discussions taking place in Tripoli with the armed movements aimed at reaching agreements with those organizations that have not yet rejoined the great Chadian family. We hope that those movements will renounce any recourse to weapons and express their expectations within the peaceful framework set by the historic political agreement of 13 August 2007 and with respect for the institutions of the Republic.

It is our view that all political initiatives having to do with national reconciliation should fall within the framework of the political agreement of 13 August and should contribute to strengthening the State apparatus for the benefit of the general interest. For we should not forget that since its independence, Chad has known only conflict or post-conflict situations, often, indeed, internal, but including in particular those fuelled from the outside to weaken the State or to topple the country's institutions. This is why we count on the international community to unreservedly condemn all

attempts to destabilize the Chadian State, and also all who use unconstitutional means, notably force, to seize power. The Chadian people, victims of insecurity due to the interminable armed struggles for power, condemn these sterile struggles and rely on the democratic political actors and on the international community to block the path to violence.

If we must extend a hand to the rebels, whose causes sometimes seem to be from the world of a revolutionary utopia, this should not be done to the detriment of the highest interest of the rule of law and of democracy. Unhappiness is at the heart of rebellions. We find mercenaries in the pay of someone from the exterior, and adventurers who use it as a source of commerce to gain unwarranted material advantages or to satisfy personal ambitions in exchange for their return to legality, in disdain of the authority of the State apparatus, of the law and of the country's regulations.

After this brief overview of Chadian political questions, allow me to raise some other issues regarding today's challenges: globalization with its hopes and anguishes, poverty, inequitable international trade, terrorism, the AIDS pandemic, and so forth. A number of international meetings have been held on these topics and on others. Resolutions and recommendations have been adopted. However, no decisive advances have been made in these areas. We can only hope that the international community will honour its commitments and that the richest will keep their promises vis-à-vis the poorest.

We cannot simply ignore another important event, the High-level Event on Climate Change and its consequences, which was held right here. We hope that the international community will learn lessons with a view to acting instead of indulging in fine statements, as was the case after the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change in Kyoto.

Yes, we need to act, and for us the most tragic case deserving the attention of the international community is that of the shrinking of Lake Chad, whose surface has been reduced in a few decades from 25,000 square kilometres to 2,500 square kilometres. Saving Lake Chad would not only contribute to the struggle against disastrous climate change on a planetary level, but would also meet the needs of 25 million people in the countries adjacent to the Lake.

Another issue is just as worrisome, and that is the conflict situations in Africa and on other continents. How can we not take a stand? We applaud the efforts of the African Union (AU) and the United Nations to find lasting solutions to the conflicts in Africa or elsewhere in the world.

This prompts us to underscore the importance of another event that has caught our attention. That is the Security Council meeting held at the level of heads of State on 25 September on the question of peace and security in Africa. We are mindful of the Council's steadily growing interest in Africa, and that meeting seems to pave the way for the strengthening of cooperation between the United Nations and the AU, especially with a view to building the capacities of the AU so that it can accomplish its peace missions in the best possible conditions. This is the moment to condemn the recent barbarous attacks on the African forces in Darfur and to express our condolences to the families of the missing.

We have great hope for the settlement of all crises in the framework of the rebirth of multilateralism and collective security, which our Secretary-General has very strongly endorsed: hopes for peace in Côte d'Ivoire, in Western Sahara, in the Democratic Republic of the Congo, in the Horn of Africa, in the Middle East and so forth.

Before I conclude, I would like to recall that we have constantly condemned before this Assembly all forms of violence and intolerance, especially their most extreme form — terrorism. We reaffirm our condemnation and our commitment to fighting these phenomena. We would like to reaffirm our commitment to strive to eliminate all sources of conflicts and all the threats that jeopardize peace and security around the world.

In this regard, I wish to recall the need to respect the principles of peaceful coexistence, which are respect for the sovereignty and the territorial integrity of States. This, of course, prompts us to reaffirm our devotion to respect for internationally recognized historical borders. We cite as an example our attachment to the policy of a single China and our opposition to Taiwan's attempts to bring about a kind of accession to the United Nations, under whatever name they might choose.

This also prompts us to express respect for the sovereign right of States to develop nuclear energy for

peaceful purposes. And we welcome the good arrangements to find solutions to the question of nuclear energy through negotiations and to find a peaceful solution to the problem of the dissemination of weapons of mass destruction.

This last prompts us once again to launch a pressing appeal to our Assembly, especially to the permanent members of the Security Council, to redress the injustice of the African continent being the only continent that does not have a permanent member seat on the Council, when the bulk of the Council's agenda is comprised of African situations.

The President: I now give the floor to His Excellency Mr. Dermot Ahern, T.D., Minister for Foreign Affairs of Ireland.

Mr. Ahern (Ireland): First of all, Mr. President, may I congratulate you on your election and wish you well in the months ahead.

Upon its formation earlier this year, the Irish Government set itself the goal of becoming a model Member State of the this great Organization. We have set out an ambitious programme to be a world leader in development assistance, rapid response to humanitarian disasters and conflict resolution.

This is because our own history shows that there is a path from famine to plenty and from conflict to peace. And from that history has grown a determination, in ordinary Irish men and women, to stand in the vanguard of the fight against conflict, hunger and the denial of human rights, a fight best fought by a strong and equally determined United Nations — a fight we cannot afford to lose.

It is also because after six decades, the core goal of the United Nations — universal peace and security — unfortunately still eludes us. Today, in spite of all our efforts, violent conflict remains all too common.

The causes of conflict are many. But very often, it is in the persistence of poverty and in the denial of human rights that we find the causes of conflict, the enduring results of conflict and the seeds of future conflict. In making peace, we must be as creative and as determined as those waging war.

The range of instruments now available strengthens our collective capacity to resolve conflict. We must use that full array with determination now. We must ensure that the United Nations Peacebuilding Commission and Peacebuilding Fund are organized and resourced to fulfil their important mandate. We must maintain our support for United Nations-mandated peacekeeping operations, which today are at an all-time high in terms of their size, scope and complexity. We must also support strengthened United Nations efforts in the fields of conflict prevention and resolution. We in Ireland will play our part.

My Government has decided to significantly increase its commitment to conflict resolution, including through the establishment of a designated unit in the Foreign Ministry, the creation of an academic Centre for Conflict Resolution, a system of roving ambassadors to affected regions and an annual fund of €25 million to assist conflict resolution in the developing world.

In the years ahead, we will also work to strengthen the capacity of the African Union and subregional organizations to make and build peace for themselves. We will focus our efforts on peacemaking during conflict and peacebuilding after conflict. We will also work on identifying, distilling and sharing the lessons of conflict resolution. We will be particularly active in Africa, including through working with our partner Governments under our Irish Aid programme. We will explore the links between climate change and conflict, because climate change directly threatens not only the most vulnerable but all of our shared goals of progress, peace and development.

The focus of our foreign policy on rights, development and now conflict resolution underlines once again Ireland's commitment to the global agenda of the United Nations. But this convergence is also underscored by our own national experience of peacemaking. Speaking here in New York in April 1969, before the appalling escalation of violence in Northern Ireland, one of my distinguished predecessors, Frank Aiken, said "I think there is sufficient wisdom if it can only be energized in our section of the world, in these islands off the North West of Europe, to settle the problem." For far too long that sufficient wisdom eluded us.

For almost 40 years it has been my duty and that of my predecessors as Minister for Foreign Affairs to brief this Assembly on the search for peace on the island of Ireland. I am particularly delighted to report

that perhaps, save for general updates on progress, this will no longer be necessary.

The conflict in Northern Ireland lasted for more than three decades and was made apparently insoluble by issues of national, cultural and religious identity, contested historical narratives and claims of sovereignty, all hardened by the direct experiences of division, inequality and violence.

Since the ceasefires of the mid-1990s and the negotiation of the Good Friday Agreement in 1998, there has been much better news to report. But the final steps to the full implementation of that Agreement were not completed until earlier this year. With the formation of the power-sharing Northern Ireland Executive, bringing together historic opponents from across the political divide, we have opened an extraordinary new chapter in the history of the island of Ireland.

Legacies of separation and distrust remain, and the inevitable challenges and difficulties of normal politics will need wise and sensitive management. But there is an overwhelming consensus that this new beginning can be nurtured and sustained.

The task is no longer to find peace, but to maintain and build on the peace we have found. I do not believe our success offers a universal, transferable formula, but I do believe that our experience of failure and then success over 40 years provides insights and lessons worth sharing. One of the specific tasks of our conflict resolution initiative is to codify those insights and lessons. But today I will offer just a few.

First, in the end, those who are part of the problem must be part of the solution — not because we approve of their actions or beliefs, but because without them it is all too easy for an agreement among others to be destroyed.

Secondly, inclusive dialogue must, however, take place on the basis of clear and guaranteed principles. In Ireland, these were consent, non-violence and parity of esteem.

Thirdly, partnerships between Governments and involving sympathetic third parties — in our case the United States and the European Union — can develop comprehensive frameworks within which enduring settlements can be reached.

Fourthly, it is often necessary to take risks for peace — but those risks must be carefully calibrated. Timing is of the essence and so is patience, and there are times when contacts must be private and at arm's length.

Fifthly, our experience demonstrates the need to address all issues, all of the causes of conflict, comprehensively, no matter how difficult and intractable they may be, and even if they have to be resolved in different time frames.

Sixth, popular endorsement of an agreement through the ballot box makes it immensely more legitimate and durable.

Finally, without effective and faithful implementation, again often with external assistance, an agreement's viability and credibility can quickly ebb away.

On a more practical and operational level, we have devised and implemented innovative arrangements for dealing with many of the issues that dominate peacemaking and peacebuilding in our case: constitutional change, power sharing, cross-border cooperation, transitional justice, policing and security reform, equality and human rights, conflict over symbols, arms decommissioning and prisoner release.

In our own process, we have learned much from others, particularly from the instance of South Africa. Together, I hope we can, in Frank Aiken's term, develop both sufficient wisdom and sufficient will to resolve enduring and complex conflicts.

Working with a strengthened United Nations and sharing lessons with one another, I passionately hope we can advance the day when political leaders from other regions of the world blighted by conflict can announce in this forum that peace has come to them too.

Northern Ireland has been added to the list of conflicts resolved. But the road to universal peace is still blocked by conflicts old, new and threatened.

Today, across the world we stand with the people of Burma. The courage of the Buddhist monks and nuns and their supporters has won universal admiration. The efforts of its regime to conceal its brutality behind a wall of silence have failed. It has been rightly condemned for its violent response. I call on its leaders at long last to respond constructively to

the wishes of the people, to stop their violence and to release Aung San Suu Kyi and all other political prisoners. The process of national reconciliation and democratization must begin in earnest, and we hope that the Secretary-General's Special Envoy will be able to report progress on his return here in a few days.

We look to the Security Council to respond effectively to the compelling calls of the international community. It is neither acceptable nor true to argue, as some of its members have, that the situation in Burma is not a question of international peace and security. The potential regional consequences of the crisis are evident to all. This places a particular onus on the Governments of China, India and of the countries of Association of Southeast Asian Nations (ASEAN). I welcome the encouraging recent signs of positive and concerned engagement and urge them to redouble their efforts.

Within the European Union, Ireland has long taken a strong and principled position on Burma. We are looking urgently at how to increase the pressure on the regime, including through further European Union restrictive measures, without harming the ordinary people, whose suffering is already so great.

As it is for people across the world, Darfur is a matter of grave concern in Ireland. We have made it a priority for our diplomacy and our Irish Aid programme. We must solve the humanitarian and security crisis while simultaneously establishing the foundations for longer-term peace and development. We urge the full, effective and speedy deployment of the African Union-United Nations Hybrid Operation in Darfur. Khartoum must actively cooperate and at last desist from all obstruction. Rebel groups must also play their part. The recent attack on peacekeepers in Darfur was an outrage and was rightly condemned here. I would like to express my sympathies and those of the Irish Government to the families of those killed.

In keeping with our proud tradition of peacekeeping, Ireland expects to make a substantial contribution to the United Nations-mandated mission to Chad and the Central African Republic to help aid refugees and address the regional dimension of the Darfur crisis.

All those who are party to the conflict must commit to the political talks in Libya next month. I welcome the Secretary-General's establishment of a trust fund to support these talks, and I pledge Ireland's support in that respect. If commitments are not fulfilled and progress does not materialize, Ireland will support further sanctions against non-cooperating parties.

I am particularly and gravely concerned at the increasingly serious humanitarian situation in Zimbabwe. The current Southern African Development Community initiative, led by President Mbeki, offers the best hope for progress and I would encourage all those involved to redouble their efforts to agree on a new political dispensation offering real political reform and economic recovery for all Zimbabweans.

The situation in the Middle East is always high on our agenda. There has been a collective international failure to establish a credible political process leading to a two-State solution. But today there are possibilities for change. The outlines of a viable settlement are clear to everyone, even if it will require difficult and painful compromises. Ireland strongly supports the dialogue between Prime Minister Olmert and President Abbas. We are also encouraged by the determination of the Arab States to pursue the historic Arab Peace Initiative. We share the hope that the international meeting now in preparation under Secretary Rice's leadership will indeed be serious and substantive and set in train a transformation of the political landscape and the lives of its people.

Ireland's historic commitment to nuclear disarmament and non-proliferation continues. We are also active in seeking a comprehensive response to the curse of cluster munitions, the appalling effects of which are all too evident in Lebanon and elsewhere. As a contribution to the collaborative effort launched in Oslo last February, Ireland will host a diplomatic conference in May 2008, which we hope will finalize the first-ever international agreement on cluster munitions.

The establishment of the Millennium Development Goals (MDGs) spurred our efforts to tackle poverty and its consequences. I greatly welcome the Secretary-General's establishment of the MDG Africa Steering Group to lead a determined push to achieve our targets for 2015.

Ireland is doing its part. We are currently spending more than 0.5 per cent of our gross national product on overseas development aid and will reach 0.7 per cent by 2012. We have substantially increased our support to humanitarian relief operations and to tackling HIV/AIDS.

But we know that more needs to be done. The donor community is failing the test set by the MDGs. Overseas aid has fallen by 5 per cent in real terms. It is not acceptable in today's world that there are still 980 million people living in abject poverty, that half of the developing world has no access to basic sanitation or that half a million women will die in pregnancy or childbirth each year. Perhaps the most damning fact is that one in seven people on this Earth today do not get enough food to eat to have a healthy and productive life. That figure jumps to one in four in sub-Saharan Africa.

Mr. Kariyawasam (Sri Lanka), Vice-President, took the Chair.

To help meet that most basic of challenges, Ireland has established a Hunger Task Force to examine the root causes of that enduring source of misery, disease and death. It will help us contribute to the MDG goal of halving hunger and poverty. I am delighted that the experts on the Hunger Task Force include Jeffrey Sachs, the Special Adviser to the Secretary-General on the MDGs.

Ireland will maintain and increase its commitment to the work of the United Nations in the fields of peace and security, development and human rights. There is no mystery to the challenges facing us, even if they are formidable. Our generation is uniquely equipped to know what it will take to deal with them. We have the scientific knowledge, the experience, the resources and, through this Organization, the mechanism for cooperation to rise to these challenges. We must summon sufficient wisdom and will to do so.

The Acting President: I now give the floor to His Excellency Mr. Patrick Pillary, Minister for Foreign Affairs and International Cooperation of the Republic of Seychelles.

Mr. Pillary (Seychelles): Allow me to first extend to all of you the fraternal greetings and best wishes of President Michel of the Republic of Seychelles, the Government and the people of Seychelles on the convening of the sixty-second session of the General Assembly. Seychelles is proud to be here today, as a partner and an ally, to further our international efforts, to address the challenges that are central to the future of all humanity and that pose a threat to global political and economic stability and security.

I join previous speakers in congratulating Mr. Srgjan Kerim on his election to the presidency of the General Assembly at its sixty-second session. His election to the helm of this Assembly is a testimony to the high esteem in which the international community holds him and his country, the former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia. I take this opportunity, too, to express my country's sincere appreciation to his predecessor, Sheikha Haya Rashed Al-Khalifa of Bahrain, for her outstanding stewardship of the work of the General Assembly at its sixty-first session.

Allow me to commend and to renew Seychelles' strong support to Secretary-General Ban Ki-moon for the determination and strong will he has shown since the beginning of his tenure in office, in strengthening the role of the United Nations.

Seychelles remains unwavering in its support of the United Nations. Our commitment has not changed since we joined this Organization 31 years ago. More than ever, we believe that the world needs strong and effective multilateralism. Indeed, we are convinced that the most effective means of advancing our collective interests is through the United Nations.

Seychelles is pleased that the overarching theme of this year's session is responding to climate change, as the General Assembly of the United Nations is the forum for concerted and comprehensive action in addressing a defining issue of our time.

Fifteen years ago, in 1992, Seychelles, a small island developing State, was the second country to accede to the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change (UNFCCC). We were convinced then, as we are now, that the Convention's primary objective of reducing the dangerous levels of carbon dioxide and other greenhouse gases in the earth's atmosphere must be realized in order to protect the environment and avoid serious socio-economic disruptions. Six years later, in 1998, Seychelles reiterated its commitment to the ideals of the UNFCCC by adopting the Kyoto Protocol. However, the attempts of the international community to act on those international agreements have been modest at best.

The challenge of development has never been higher on the international agenda. However, the adverse impacts of climate change are a major barrier for the achievement of sustainable development goals in many countries, especially small island developing

States, which are recognized as being most vulnerable to climate change.

We must emphasize again that for the majority of small island developing States, agriculture, fisheries and tourism have for a long time been the mainstay of survival and economic development. Let us not forget that small island developing States are home to a sizeable proportion of the world's biodiversity and that the majority of the species are endemic and increasingly under threat because of climate change.

In Seychelles, the fisheries sector is a key pillar of our economy. It is expected that changes in climate may cause migratory shifts in tuna aggregations to other locations, thus depriving our country of one of its main sources of income. Moreover, inshore and traditional fishing, the mainstay of local fishermen and a major source of food, is also highly threatened. Food security on islands is at stake.

The impacts of climate change on the tourism sector are also expected to be significant, and that is why we believe that support for economic diversification towards other revenue-generating sectors in small island States is more than necessary.

Climate change is also a security issue. But it is not merely a matter of narrow national security — it has a new dimension. It is a question of our collective security and responsibility in a fragile and increasingly interdependent world, where the notion of borders has undergone a powerful symbolic transformation.

It is now up to politicians, businessmen and civil society to continue the work accomplished by scientists. The peoples of the world are increasingly looking to their leaders to take action, and the time is now. A week ago, at a meeting of the Global Island Partnership in Rome, our President, James Michel, launched the Sea Level Rise Foundation, as an attempt to ensure that island nations have the capacity to adapt to climate change. Together we are mobilizing leadership, gathering resources and sharing skills, knowledge, technologies and innovation in a cost-effective and sustainable way that will catalyse action for conservation and sustainable livelihoods on islands and low-lying areas in the face of climate change.

We count on the valuable support of the international community for ensuring the success of this noble and important endeavour. We call on the developed countries to take a strong lead and commitment in combating climate change. Aspirational global emissions reduction goals are not sufficient. We believe that the Kyoto Protocol paves the way forward for Annex I countries to fulfil their commitments under UNFCCC. We urge those parties to commit to their legally binding targets and to translate them into concrete actions for the reduction of their gas emissions.

We believe that a United Nations-based multilateral approach that builds on the Kyoto Protocol framework is the only decisive way of moving forward. There cannot be any doubt as to the major importance of the first steps taken at Kyoto and of the quantum improvements brought about by the provisions of the Protocol. The size and urgency of the problem requires that we take bold initiatives and compromises.

However, as the globe suffers because of climate change, it is essential that the international community as a whole be formally and unequivocally reminded that neither the efforts made thus far in implementing UNFCCC, nor the emissions reduction targets, set on average at 5.2 per cent, adopted in Kyoto represent an adequate effort to stabilize greenhouse gas concentrations in the atmosphere at safe levels. We know that we need to do much more. In that regard, we would like to take this opportunity to praise the recent work accomplished by the Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change in urging the need for deeper cuts in greenhouse gasses of 25 per cent to 40 per cent below 1990 levels by 2020. Moreover, we would like to extend our heartfelt appreciation for the determination shown by our Secretary-General in facilitating the international dialogue to address the problem.

It is now up to us to build the political momentum needed in order to ensure that a comprehensive agreement is met at the world summit on climate change in Bali, Indonesia. There is an urgent need to ensure that developing nations, including small island developing States, can continue to develop and prosper in an equitable manner. Small island developing States need to be equipped financially, technically and technologically to adapt to global climate change and sea level rise without redirecting their limited resources from sustainable development.

Allow me to now turn briefly to other issues that are of particular importance to Seychelles.

First of all, Seychelles recognizes that globalization has the potential to advance human development throughout the world. But it is not automatic, for globalization has also increased our vulnerability, insecurity and the possibility of marginalization.

It is internationally recognized that trade can be an important source of financing for development. In this particular context, Seychelles strongly believes that more emphasis should be placed on the development dimension of small island developing States in multilateral trade negotiations, in recognition of their specificities and structural handicaps. Moreover, in our view, ownership of development orientations by recipient countries is the precondition for the emergence of a true partnership in development cooperation.

Furthermore, it is extremely important that the whole issue of development policies and cooperation be monitored closely within the international system. Decisions affecting development are being taken in different arenas, forums and agencies. Increasingly, there is the need to ensure coherence in policies and programmes. The international system currently does not have an effective mechanism for conducting such an exercise. We reiterate our belief that one of the urgent tasks of the moment is to create a mechanism within the international architecture that will focus on trade, finance, technology and development policy in an integrated manner.

Seychelles remains determined to build its economy based on our assertion of the principle of responsibility for our own development. Our efforts at economic re-engineering have been very dynamic. The Seychelles Strategy 2017 commits the Government of the Republic of Seychelles to doubling the gross domestic product in the next 10 years. The reforms being undertaken will not only ensure that our economy continues to grow but also will facilitate the participation of every Seychellois in wealth creation. That is the commitment of the Government of Seychelles. However, owing to our inherent vulnerabilities, we need the support of the international community in guaranteeing that the considerable successes achieved so far in the economic and social sectors are not lost.

I have spoken thus far on climate and development issues, which are both closely related to other critical areas of the international agenda. One such area concerns peace and security. It is tragic and painful to witness the continued cycle of violence around the world. Peace accords and ceasefire agreements do not, unfortunately, entail a cessation of hostilities.

We support the strong will shown by the United Nations, working alongside the African Union, in ensuring that peace and security are brought to the people in the Darfur region of the Sudan. Seychelles associates itself with all those calling and working for peace in Africa, the Middle East, Asia and elsewhere.

Against the backdrop of increased violence from war and terrorism, it is clear to us that violence and the use of force cannot be the answer. We must embrace multilateralism and insist that international relations be guided by the rule of law as the basis for our collective security.

The United Nations remains a significant partner and interlocutor of the modern development and progress of Seychelles. It is with complete faith, as a small island developing State, that we renew our trust in the principles of the Charter. We cannot stop emphasizing the compelling urgency of altering the design and function of the Security Council, if it is to fulfil the mandate conferred by the Charter of 1945 in the realities of the world today.

With regard to the General Assembly, what is needed is a resuscitation and use of the powers of the General Assembly and the assertion of its role as the principal organ of the United Nations. The Assembly is a forum of equals. Its pronouncements and policy decisions must carry the stamp of legitimacy as the voice of the international community. However, we must emphasize that, irrespective of whatever institutional arrangements we may devise, in the final analysis, it is the commitment and political will among Member States alone that can make the system work.

(*spoke in French*)

In the demanding context of globalization, regions are players with which the multilateral organizations, donors and international investors devote increasingly sustained attention. The regional approach is also the best bastion when it comes to mounting defences against terrorism, insecurity, banditry, trafficking, pandemics, or to providing an efficient response to disasters in real time. A region is,

ultimately, for the countries that comprise it, the strongest legal space in which those countries can obtain the natural resources and raw materials that they share.

That is, therefore, the aim of the Indian Ocean Commission, which strives to defend the interests of all countries of the Indian Ocean in all areas. What it represents today and the place that it occupies in the landscape of regional cooperation organizations is due, in large part, to the specialized agencies of the United Nations. I would very much wish for that support to be strengthened in the coming months, so that the Commission truly has the means to achieve its ambitions. The observer status that the Commission obtained in the General Assembly on 4 December 2006 enabled our regional organization to acquire additional legitimacy to work with the specialized agencies of the United Nations. We welcome those new prospects and paths of cooperation.

(*spoke in English*)

The future of generations to come rests not so much on the vigour of our debate and the declarations we make in this Assembly at its sixty-second session, but on the action we take. Our people are demanding that, collectively, we emerge with a clear vision, that we display the courage and unrelenting commitment to build a world of peace, justice and equity that we can inhabit together in true harmony. Let us here resolve to build one world where every man, woman and child can realize the true purpose and fulfilment of life.

The Acting President: I now give the floor to His Excellency Mr. Yeshey Dorgi, chairman of the delegation of the Kingdom of Bhutan.

Mr. Dorji (Bhutan): I offer my delegation's congratulations to the President for his election as the President of the General Assembly at its sixty-second session and assure him of our support and cooperation. My delegation would also like to convey our appreciation to his predecessor, Sheikha Haya Rashed Al-Khalifa, for the able manner in which she guided the work of the Assembly at the sixty-first session. We also convey our appreciation to the Secretary-General, Mr. Ban Ki-moon, for the excellent leadership he provides to our Organization.

We are gratified that climate change and the Millennium Development Goals are among the top priorities of this session's presidency. The irony of climate change is that its worst impact will be on the developing world, particularly small and island developing countries, who are least responsible for the problem. As complex as the issue is, climate change is inextricably linked to development and the debate engenders issues of equity, fairness and the right of countries to grow economically. The challenges of climate change must, therefore, be addressed within the framework of sustainable development bearing in mind the principle of common but differentiated responsibilities.

Bhutan has two major concerns about climate change. First is the potential adverse impact on agriculture, which is the mainstay of 79 per cent of our population. Second, more serious and immediate, is the rate at which Himalayan glaciers are receding. Bhutan has approximately 3,000 glacial lakes, of which 24 have been identified as potentially dangerous. Floods caused by glacial lake outbursts have caused devastation in the past, and future outbursts will be far worse. Our capacity to carry out research, monitor developments, forecast outbursts and take mitigation measures is severely constrained by a lack of scientific, technical and financial resources.

In the Millennium Declaration of 2000, world leaders undertook to channel the fruits of globalization to benefit all people and lift one sixth of humanity from extreme poverty. At the midpoint between the adoption of the Millennium Development Goals (MDGs) and the target date of 2015, reports, including the 2007 Millennium Development Goals Report, provide a mixed picture at best. The Secretary-General has rightly said that the world does not need new promises to achieve the MDGs. What is needed is urgent and concerted action by political leaders and stakeholders to meet, in their entirety, the commitments made in the Millennium Declaration and in the Monterrey Consensus adopted at the 2002 International Conference on Financing for Development and at the 2005 World Summit.

The 2006 midterm comprehensive global review of the implementation of the Programme of Action for the Least Developed Countries for the Decade 2001-2010 revealed that the least developed countries were unlikely to achieve all the goals and objectives of the Programme of Action, and therefore the MDGs, if trends continued. It is the moral and political imperative of the international community to help the least developed countries through strong supportive

global programmes, measures and policies. However, one year later, the situation remains largely unchanged.

Geographical constraints present enormous challenges to landlocked developing countries. Bhutan is working closely with the group of landlocked developing countries to address those challenges through the cooperation of transit countries and the international community. The needs of the landlocked countries are well-documented and there is a road map for global partnership set out in the Almaty Programme of Action.

Bhutan has made tremendous socio-economic progress during the past 45 years. However, there are many hurdles to overcome before we can stand on our own feet and be self-reliant. We are determined to achieve the cherished goal of self-reliance at the earliest time possible. Until then, we will have to rely on external assistance and support. Here, I would like to record my country's appreciation to bilateral and multilateral donors.

We hope that under the leadership of the President the Assembly will undertake results-oriented intergovernmental negotiations on Security Council reform in order to bring that issue to its logical conclusion. As we have stated before, Bhutan supports India, Japan and their G4 group partners for permanent membership. We also support Africa's claim for permanent seats.

My country has as much interest in the work of the Security Council as others and would like to see it adapt to current demands and realities. Since becoming a Member in 1971, my country has served in a number of important bodies of the United Nations, but not in the Security Council. We are confident of our capacity to contribute directly to the work of the Council. Bhutan therefore announced in 1999 its candidature for a non-permanent seat for the period 2013-2014. If realized, Bhutan would gain entry into the Council after four decades in the United Nations. It is our sincere hope that the General Assembly will support Bhutan's candidacy during the elections in 2012.

Terrorism strikes at the very foundation of humanism and cannot be justified under any circumstances. This evil must be countered through cooperation at the bilateral, regional and global levels. At the global level, greater efforts must be made to implement the United Nations Global Counter-Terrorism Strategy and conclude a comprehensive convention on international terrorism. Within our region, the leaders of the South Asian Association for Regional Cooperation, at their 14th summit meeting, held in New Delhi in April 2007, reaffirmed their commitment to collectively fight terrorism. That is a positive development, but more needs to be done to rid the region of this menace.

Allow me to briefly apprise this body of developments in my country. The development model pursued by Bhutan is based on the philosophy of "Gross National Happiness", a concept conceived by our fourth King, His Majesty Jigme Singye Wangchuck, in the early 1970s. Gross National Happiness is premised on the belief that, if happiness is the ultimate desire of every individual, then it is the responsibility and purpose of the State to create conditions that enable citizens to realize this desire. We are glad that the concept of Gross National Happiness is drawing increasing global attention and we stand ready to share our experiences in this regard.

Bhutan is now set on the irreversible path to a full-fledged democratic constitutional monarchy. The people of Bhutan are looking forward to 2008, when parliamentary democracy will be introduced. Next year, Bhutan will also celebrate the formal coronation of His Majesty Jigme Khesar Namgyel Wangchuck and the centenary of the Wangchuck dynasty. As we stand at the threshold of these momentous developments, the people of Bhutan look to our friends and well-wishers and the global community for support and inspiration.

Before I conclude, allow me to refer to the comments made yesterday by the honourable Foreign Minister of Nepal regarding the problem of the people in camps in Nepal. As her comments were less than objective, it is important that misperceptions be clarified. It is disingenuous on her part to blame Bhutan for the lack of progress in our bilateral talks when it is widely known that disruptions to the bilateral process resulted from the political instability in her country, which were accompanied by frequent changes of Government and positions on the issue. Bhutan for its part has always been committed to the bilateral process and has not deviated from the understandings and agreements reached between the two countries.

The issue is a highly complex one that does not lend itself to conventional solutions. The genesis of the problem lies in illegal immigration. The camps were

established without any screening procedures when only 304 people, claiming to be refugees from Bhutan, arrived in eastern Nepal. Screening procedures were put in place by the Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees only after two and a half years, and by then the number had reached its present proportion. In view of the complexity of the issue, the two Governments had agreed that the bilateral process was the only way to find a solution. In this regard, we appreciate the offer of the United States of America and other countries for third country resettlement, as it would help address that humanitarian problem.

While the Royal Government remains committed to the bilateral process, it has serious security concerns with Maoist infiltration of the camps and the formation of several radical groups, who have publicly stated their objective of destabilizing Bhutan and disrupting the country's first parliamentary elections next year.

In conclusion, I would like to once again convey my delegation's full support to the President and wish the General Assembly every success at it sixty-second session. Tashi delek.

The Acting President: I now give the floor to His Excellency Mr. Elvin Nimrod, Minister for Foreign Affairs, International Trade, Legal Affairs, Carriacou and Petite Martinique Affairs of Grenada.

Mr. Nimrod (Grenada): I am honoured to join previous delegations in congratulating the President on his election as President of this Assembly at its sixty-second session. Let me assure him of Grenada's unconditional support as he guides our important and crucial deliberations towards a fruitful and tangible conclusion.

I also take this opportunity to pay tribute to Mrs. Haya Rashed Al-Khalifa, who laboured tirelessly during her presidency of the Assembly at its sixty-first session, and to her timely and productive initiatives. In addition, my delegation would like to renew its support to the Secretary-General in his endeavour to advance the agenda of the United Nations and to make it more effective.

In his opening remarks to this General Assembly the President identified five areas as our priorities: climate change, economic development, the Millennium Development Goals, terrorism and United Nations reform. Grenada salutes that vision in recognizing the critical issues facing our world today, and it is through this lens that I would like to project the views of my country.

On the question of climate change, we applaud the Secretary-General for convening the recently concluded High-level Event on Climate Change, and we are satisfied that this will provide the stimulus and momentum required for the forthcoming negotiations in Bali. Indeed, for this sixty-second session, my delegation welcomes the tremendous emphasis being placed on climate change and, based on the statements made thus far, we are heartened to note the overwhelming commitment to preparing a better world for our future generations.

The recently concluded event was not our first attempt. Climate change was also addressed in Rio de Janeiro, Barbados and Mauritius. It seems that we are blessed with a penchant for songs of praise in this multilateral temple of commitment and sacrifice. The chorus of our voices reverberates loudly in these halls of wisdom, only to sound a hollow note as we exit the archways of these chambers and backslide into reality. As in all of these conferences, the real challenge that we face is to convert what seems like a religious fervour into good deeds in the neighbourhood of our global village. As we preach, so too must we become converts. Let us move from resolutions to results.

As we head towards Bali, we must craft a negotiating table that extends well beyond the dimensions of the intergovernmental process. That table must have seats for the unborn generations, as well as seats for this generation wishing to taste the social and economic prosperity of a new world order.

Because of sea-level rise, we in the small island States face the spectre of environmental refugees and our people are already being displaced. For example, the Maldives with its 1,900 islands, that country has undertaken significant expenditure building sea defences and in creating safe zone resettlements for its people.

The low-lying islands and countries of the world deserve a far more robust and accountable response from the international community. In that regard, we welcome the investigation in the Maldives of the human dimensions of climate change.

As Grenada knows so well, the effects of climate change represent the most dangerous threat to the economic development, peace and security and

territorial existence of small island States. We therefore welcome the efforts of the British Mission here in New York, which has worked ceaselessly to raise awareness and understanding of the threat posed by climate change, echoing the very concerns that many small States and low-lying coastal nations have raised over the last 15 years.

In fact, one thing that has become painfully clear to Grenada is how easily — in the blink of an eye — an entire country can be flattened. In our case, it was the eye of Hurricane Ivan. Hurricanes and cyclones are appearing in unusual latitudes and with greater ferocity. They are appearing further south in the Atlantic, affecting islands like Grenada, and they are appearing further north in the Indian Ocean and hit the Seychelles for the first time in 50 years. Just this summer we have seen two category five hurricanes, Dean and Felix, make landfall in the Caribbean within two weeks of each other, causing loss of lives and hundreds of millions of dollars in damages.

In Grenada's case, the destruction was twice its gross domestic product. However, with the help of God, the resilience of the Grenadian people, the help from our Caribbean and international friends including the United States of America, and with the leadership of my Prime Minister, we continue our aspirations to build back better. In that regard, I would like to pay special tribute to the People's Republic of China, whose generous assistance and commitment to our development have been greatly appreciated by the Government and the people of Grenada. Because of their help, Grenada was able to host Cricket World Cup 2007 at our new stadium, which was financed and constructed by the People's Republic of China.

Despite all concerted efforts, climate change has led to a downward assessment of our sovereign credit rating and Grenada is now under the guidance of the International Monetary Fund. Grenada cannot borrow money on the international market to replant its nutmeg, to mend its coastal infrastructure, or to upgrade its tourism industry. As a result, we have imposed a reconstruction levy on our people, at a time when global energy and food prices are increasing. The economic burden of global warming is hitting the pockets of ordinary women and men in the streets of Grenada, the poor farmer, the hardworking teacher and the waiters and waitresses in our hotels. Those ordinary island citizens are paying the price for the lifestyles of the major emitters.

A new paradigm is needed within the United Nations system and the Bretton Woods institutions. Within that paradigm must lie an understanding that small island developing States have an environmental and economic vulnerability that warrants a new set of metrics, a new set of rules and a new level of support.

As we head towards a post-2012 agreement, we need aggressive mitigation targets. Those targets are critical for us, because sea temperature rise is already causing bleaching of the coastal reefs. Loss of those ecosystems has a harmful impact on fish stocks, one of our main sources of protein and foreign exchange.

The Caribbean Community Climate Change Centre has said that a further one degree temperature rise will lead to significant loss of tuna and dolphin stocks. And to compound the matter, in Mauritius and the Seychelles, tuna stocks are diving deeper seeking cooler waters. In recent years, the fish catch has dwindled and revenues have diminished. To alleviate those problems, more investment is now needed in new studies, as well as in fishing technologies, equipment and practices.

As we approach the Bali meeting, Grenada reiterates its position, articulated by the Alliance of Small Island States, that the viability and adaptability of the most vulnerable, such as small island developing States, must be the fundamental benchmark against which all negotiations are framed. In the efforts to mitigate climate change, no nation must be left behind. Let that be our guiding principle, if we are to make meaningful progress in Bali.

While these negotiations are ongoing, my country and many other islands and low-lying countries are taking all necessary steps to cushion the fallouts and dislocations. Adaptation funding and funding for economic development are almost indivisible.

Grenada calls for the urgent completion of the institutional arrangements for the Adaptation Fund, in a manner that guarantees that priority should be given to the needs of the small island developing States. On the question of the Global Environmental Facility, we welcome the energy, enthusiasm and flexibility of its new Chief Executive Officer. We are, however, disappointed with the implications of the Resource Allocation Framework. Nonetheless, we look forward to strengthening the working relationship with the Facility following reforms that make it more responsive to the needs of small island States.

Climate change, energy, economic development and the Millennium Development Goals are so tightly interwoven that over the long term, we cannot tease out any one thread without weakening the fabric of our common aspirations for prosperity and peace.

It is well known that women are the most affected by poverty and suffer the highest levels of marginalization. As the United Nations continues its study of the issue of gender architecture and the general advancement of women, Grenada sees the empowerment of women as being critical for our own development. We therefore urge other States to contribute to the many bodies of the United Nations that promote and seek to secure avenues for women in the development process. Let us contribute to their budgets and not to their demise; for even if only a few benefit, that sets the stage for others to follow. In our view, the advancement of women represents a most powerful force for social and economic progress. Investment in gender mainstreaming is an investment in social justice, economic diversity and political stability.

The United Nations must lead by example. Guided by the tenets of the Millennium Development Goals, Grenada is working assiduously to improve the status of women. Several years ago only a few women held high political or other public offices in Grenada, but today we are proud to report that approximately 50 per cent of the Cabinet of our executive branch is made up of women and that many others hold top positions within the public service.

The challenge facing the vulnerable States of the world can be resolved only if we ourselves transform our thinking and reform our methodologies. For that reason, we support the revitalization of the General Assembly. My delegation joins the call for the expansion of the membership of the Security Council in both categories to allow for a Council more representative of the 192 States and five regions which it represents. That way we can achieve much in assembling a stronger and more powerful Council which will be better able to fulfil its mandate in a fair, just and transparent manner.

Grenada, as small as it is, has the honour to highlight its humble but valuable contribution to the securing of stability in Haiti. This year Grenada has increased its deployment of police personnel to the United Nations Stabilization Mission in Haiti. We encourage others to give whatever support they can, no matter how minute, to the efforts of international peacekeeping initiatives. We are, however, hopeful that very soon our unit and others like it will no longer be needed.

In closing, I must indicate that despite the challenges I have outlined relating to our economic viability and territorial integrity, we still have to pay close attention to terrorism and other threats to world peace and security. Grenada therefore remains steadfast in its commitment to the international community to fight terrorism in all its forms and to ensure that the seeds of that poisonous weed never take root on our shores. Grenada is convinced that a free and democratic world is our best hope and therefore pledges its full support towards the betterment of lives worldwide. I call on all nations, big and small, rich and poor, to contribute even more to that noble task.

We are all obviously singing from the same song sheet. Let us harmonize the sound of our voices to amplify action for the citizens of our world. It must echo triumphantly across the generations, so that when it is replayed with fidelity to our children and our grandchildren they will listen with dignity, and not with disdain.

The Acting President: I now call on Her Excellency Ms. Lisa Shoman, Minister for Foreign Affairs and Foreign Trade of Belize.

Ms. Shoman (Belize): For more than 20 years we have been talking about rising atmospheric temperatures, the depletion of the ozone layer, rising sea levels and the impending inundation of low-lying coastal areas. Now that the climate change debate has finally become the rage, those of us who see the change and worry about the inevitable must unfortunately still contend with entrenched special interests who, despite the overwhelming evidence now available, continue to argue otherwise.

We are focusing our general debate on climate change, and it is the hope of my delegation that this will lead to more decisive action by all Member States so that we can begin to make the changes we believe are necessary for us to reverse the trends which so far continue to lead us down a destructive path.

We already agree that negotiations on action to tackle climate change should be conducted within the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate

Change. We subscribe to the principle that each of us has a role to play. Those who are the largest polluters must reverse these trends. Those who are not among the largest polluters must take the necessary measures aimed at mitigation, as well as adaptation methods, to help in reversing those trends.

Developed countries must recognize the special needs of the most vulnerable, in order to support our efforts towards sustainable development and to assist us to make our communities more adaptable to change. We must develop the capacity to take action. We must adopt more sustainable practices. For that to occur we must take specific action to limit greenhouse gas emissions. It is not enough to say that we will reduce harmful emissions. We have been saying that since Rio; we must do it.

The European Union commitment on climate change is important politically, but we need to move beyond symbolism to action. Other developed countries and regions, as well as emerging economies, must take substantial steps towards mitigation and develop and share the technologies which result in low-carbon or no-carbon economies.

In Belize, the symbiosis between our ecology and our economy is evident. Agricultural production, fishing, mineral extraction and hydrocarbon exploration as well as tourism are all subject to the caprices of the climate. Must we also be subjected to an uneven playing field in the arena of international trade, which is fast reaching the crisis level? To mix metaphors, sometimes a rising tide can swamp vulnerable boats.

The international community must keep development in perspective in the current climate change debate, since, as has been said before, economic development better enables countries to tackle climate change. Our focus on the urgency of the current situation should not, however, detract from the equally urgent if not dire situation of the development agenda, resulting from complex factors including climate change and the failure of the international economic system to reinvent itself.

At the heart of the crisis is a fundamental distrust, and no place is this more evident than in the Doha Development Round. Doha doled out harsh consequences for developing countries, particularly those that are commodity and preference dependent. We ask the question: Is there is a serious commitment to the survival of the multilateral trading system? If the answer is no, we can expect to see even more bilateral and regional arrangements, resulting in a movement away from the idea that together we are better at solving our common problems.

The discussions on climate change and the larger development debate exhibit the need for an effective, legitimate multilateral system that is fair and balanced and that operates in a transparent and inclusive manner. Responsible leadership that adheres to the basic principles of justice and the rule of law is even more critical to achieving that system and maintaining its integrity.

It is in this spirit of respect for law and justice and of the desire for equity and for the preservation of human rights that we continue to struggle with the decision of this body to exclude any true debate over the inclusion of the right of the 23 million people of Taiwan to representation in this institution. The desire of the people of Taiwan is not only to take part in the deliberations of this institution but, indeed, to be engaged on the critical issues facing the international community. We remain steadfast in our support for their aspirations and will continue to advocate for their representation, as well as that of the Saharawi people, who lack a voice in our United Nations.

We continue to monitor the situation in the Middle East with great concern. The question of Palestine remains the crux of the conflicts in the region. In that regard, it is high time that we realized the vision of two States, Palestine and Israel, living side by side in peace and security. We join those who expect that the international meeting to be held in the near future will yield results substantial enough to translate that vision into reality.

The United Nations remains the key institution to facilitate cooperation and build global solidarity to solve our pressing economic, social and political problems. Its effectiveness has been challenged. The United Nations and its Member States have responded to this challenge by embarking on a comprehensive reform process to overhaul the system and to ensure that it is better equipped to meet contemporary global demands.

We applaud reform that has been achieved in peacebuilding, human rights and humanitarian assistance and encourage the United Nations to monitor these developments for their effectiveness and

their compliance with their mandates and with the Charter of the United Nations. Belize continues to support comprehensive reform of the Security Council. In particular, we agree with other Member States which have called for a more results-oriented debate during the sixty-second session.

Building trust requires a return to basics. To advance development, we must return to the basic principle of equity. In international peace and security, we must return to the basic principles of the United Nations Charter and the rule of law.

In the matter of climate change, that greatest challenge to our civilization, we must look to science to make those arguments which will diminish the sceptics. And we must return to the basic principles enshrined in the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change.

Let us give meaning to the moment. Let us get to work.

The Acting President: I now call on His Excellency Mr. Ednan Karabaev, Minister for Foreign Affairs of the Kyrgyz Republic.

Mr. Karabaev (Kyrgyzstan) (*spoke in Russian*): At the outset, let me join others in congratulating Mr. Srgjan Kerim on his election to the presidency of the General Assembly at its sixty-second session. I assure him that the delegation of Kyrgyzstan stands ready to cooperate with him. On behalf of my delegation I wish him every success in fulfilling his responsibilities.

I wish to pay tribute to Her Excellency Sheikha Haya Rashed Al-Khalifa for her outstanding stewardship during the previous session of the General Assembly.

I would also like to take this opportunity to congratulate the Secretary-General, His Excellency Mr. Ban Ki-moon, on his election to his high and responsible post and to wish him every success in his important work. I am confident that his vast experience and diplomatic skill will enable him to achieve all the goals of the United Nations.

It would no doubt be difficult to come to a common agreement about the date on which the new millennium began — whether it started with the tragedy of 2001 or harks back to 1991, when the structure of the world order changed. I believe that the proponents of either theory would agree that a new period has emerged: a time when the interdependence of States has become a vivid reality leading to greater vulnerability. Problems have become global, whereas globalization has become localized.

In the face of all these dilemmas, the United Nations unswervingly maintains its status as an organization whose core value is to promote the moral principles of solidarity. The formation of a global civil society and the recognition of universally accepted rights and freedoms under the auspices of the United Nations play a significant role in furthering the process of consolidation.

This clearly shows that society is capable of refraining from war and solving its problems by using its peacekeeping potential. Thoughtfully building the future is not possible without reviewing and continuing strategic planning of socio-economic development. Fifteen years ago, one of the most noteworthy of United Nations conferences took place at Rio de Janeiro. There, the concept of sustainable development was defined as a new tenet for humankind. The main purpose was to create a new mechanism enabling us to resolve existing social tensions and to prevent future ones through cooperation among States and the formation of a global civil society.

The relationship between the State and the society develops differently in each country. The Kyrgyz Republic has come a long way in affirming democratic values, conducting constitutional reform and fiscal decentralization. All this has been reflected in the national development strategy approved by the President of the Kyrgyz Republic, Mr. Kurmanbek Bakiev. The aim of that document is to achieve sustainable development by 2010; it is based on the principles of self-fulfilment and human security, which are the basic source of positive change in the sphere of human development.

At the same time, we are well aware that long-term sustainable development depends on the stability of human relationships based on an understanding of how to use existing resources for social and economic development today and of what we must leave for future generations.

Seven years ago, the General Assembly adopted the Millennium Development Goals, thereby defining our objectives for the future and the conditions needed to achieve them. Attainment of the eight Goals and tackling of the 15 challenges will serve as a basis both

for our global initiative and for realizing the potential of regional development.

Nevertheless, level of development varies from region to region. This is particularly relevant for mountainous regions, which require a different strategy for sustainable development which takes into account each area's specific potential in natural resources. In addition to defining the ecological parameters, it is necessary to define the economic and geographic peculiarities of mountainous regions that call for a special system of management which would give priority to local self-governance. Despite their significant resource potential, mountainous territories need to address as a priority problems related to living standards and quality of life. In that regard, the Kyrgyz Republic believes that a second Global Mountain Summit should be convened, at which we could formulate a definitive sustainable policy for mountainous regions, along with relevant norms of international law.

Even what is seemingly the most insignificant social inequality can destroy the social integrity of humankind. Similarly, equal protection of rights and freedoms and the adoption of universal values of respect for human life enable us to fulfil the principles of the Seville Statement Violence, which defines war as a product of human culture.

The primary source of conflict is, in fact, lack of social responsibility. The development strategy of every single country should establish social responsibility as a basic characteristic for elaborating approaches to regional and global coordination, thus improving the environment and reducing energy shortages. Regional parameters of responsibility will then create a new type of society, which will be no longer a society at risk, but rather a society of security.

I have no doubt that all of today's participants, as well as all countries that accepted the MDGs as a basis for their national development, are striving to establish social peace and social equality, but the establishment of a socially-oriented world order requires the strengthening of mechanisms to promote the adoption of decisions at the highest level. It is necessary that such mechanisms include both the monitoring of joint efforts and parameters of progress achieved in the framework of the most effective implementation of the MDGs. The initiative of the Kyrgyz President to proclaim 20 February a world day of social justice would serve as such a mechanism. We kindly request the General Assembly to consider adopting a resolution to that effect at the current session.

The establishment of social justice has been a dream of humankind for many millennia. There was a time when some were burned at the stake for entertaining such dreams or attempting to establish a community of social justice. At one time, dictatorship and authoritarianism prospered under the pretext of a call to social justice. That happened because of a disparity between the proclaimed elevated goals and the means of their achievement.

In the third millennium, the world's nations have defined development goals in the framework of a united society. The means to achieve those goals must correspond to a high level of civic awareness of the potential of peacekeeping. We already have the grounds for a constructive dialogue defining the dynamics of peacekeeping for humankind's development. The United Nations has been a foundation of such dialogue for several decades.

Allow me from this rostrum to confirm the adherence of the Kyrgyz Republic to the goals and purposes of the United Nations to maintain peace, security and a prosperous life for all the nations of the Earth.

The Acting President: I now give the floor to His Excellency Mr. Charles Savarin, Minister for Foreign Affairs, Trade, Labour and the Public Service of the Commonwealth of Dominica.

Mr. Savarin (Dominica): Let me at the outset congratulate Mr. Kerim on his election as President of the General Assembly at its sixty-second session and assure him of the cooperation of the Dominica delegation throughout this session. I commend his predecessor, Sheikha Haya Rashed Al-Khalifa, for her leadership during the sixty-first session of the General Assembly.

I also wish to congratulate Secretary-General Ban Ki-moon on his election. I wish him a long and successful tenure, and hope that under his leadership the United Nations will give greater attention to the plight of the world's small island developing States, which are among the most vulnerable to climate change, natural disasters and a rise in sea levels.

In the interdependent world which we live in today, the promotion of the fundamental values of

peace, democracy, human rights and development depends on strong multilateral institutions. Dominica believes that it is only a strong United Nations, sensitive to the variable geometry of its own complex construction, that can serve as the foundation of our shared ambitions for effective multilateralism and a rules-based international order.

The experience of the past decade has taught us one important lesson: global challenges require global responses, and those challenges can receive the appropriate responses only through the framework of multilateral action. The United Nations is the undisputed centre for multilateralism, and we must all demonstrate unwavering commitment to vesting in the United Nations the authority and to offering it the space to undertake effective interventions in the interest of the preservation of human life, human rights, peace, justice, democracy and the rule of law.

More than ever, we need a United Nations which is not only guided by the principles that oversaw its creation, but capable of adapting to the growing challenges of today's globalized world. We need an effective United Nations that will place the highest priority on development, while having the capacity to respond to the various crises that threaten international peace and security.

The work of the international community in poverty alleviation must be accelerated as the chasm between the rich and the poor continues to widen. In that connection, the importance of achieving the Millennium Development Goals (MDGs) by 2015 is critical. We must therefore rededicate ourselves to the implementation of the actions called for in the United Nations Decade for the Eradication of Poverty and in relevant resolutions of the General Assembly, including those related to the right to development, the alleviation of burdensome debt, and fair and equitable trading rules.

Climate change is the most pressing environmental problem humankind has ever faced. It seriously threatens human security and will undermine our ability to achieve the MDGs. Unless there is a global and collective response, this planet will become unlivable for most of us.

Small island developing States are most vulnerable to the effects of climate change, even though they contribute the least to emissions of greenhouse gases. Sea-level rise threatens the territorial existence of small island developing States, and low-lying islands in the Indian Ocean, the Pacific and the Caribbean may simply disappear in the next 30 years or less as the melting of ice caps and mountain glaciers on all continents becomes the new reality of unchecked climate change. The disappearance of beaches and coastal tourism plants and the loss of coastal communication infrastructure would devastate the tourism economy of most island States. Other regions are also beginning to experience the effects of those climatic changes, with persistent conditions of drought followed by devastating flooding.

Rising sea temperature is causing death and the bleaching of coral reefs, which in turn are impacting negatively on fish stocks, the major protein source of island States. It is estimated that a one-degree increase in sea temperature over pre-industrial levels will lead to significant loss of tuna and dolphin stocks for a large number of island States.

Rising sea temperature also provides a fertile ground for the development of tropical storms and hurricanes, which affect the Caribbean region every year. Climate change is contributing to the frequency and severity of those storms. We are currently in the midst of the 2007 hurricane season and, over a two-week period in the month of August, the Caribbean region suffered the onslaught of two category-5 hurricanes, Dean and Felix. Those storms seriously affected Dominica, Guadeloupe, Martinique, Saint Lucia, Jamaica, Belize, Honduras, Nicaragua and Mexico. We are only half-way through this hurricane season, which is forecast to have seven category-5 hurricanes. It may very well be that the worst is yet to come.

My own country, Dominica, was severely battered by Hurricane Dean, the third-worst hurricane to make landfall in the Caribbean since 1850. After 15 hours of buffeting by winds of 110 miles per hour and continuous rainfall, our agricultural economy was destroyed, our infrastructure devastated by swollen rivers and numerous landslides, and our housing stock seriously affected. We appreciate greatly the solidarity of a number of countries, regional and extra-regional, and the generous support they provided in the immediate aftermath, but now comes the serious challenge of reconstruction, which is estimated to cost over a $100 million.

The high-level event on climate change helped to underscore that doing nothing about climate change will have enormous negative implications for all countries, and more particularly for the least developed countries and small island developing States. The pace of climate change negotiations is disconcertingly slow because it is not adequately responsive to the urgency dictated by science.

We urge all the nations of the world to come to Bali in December prepared to advance the multilateral negotiations. A demonstration of collective political will and commitment to determined action will be critical if we are to reach agreement on a fair, effective, flexible and inclusive climate regime under the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change and its Kyoto Protocol. Developed countries and the more advanced developing countries must make a greater effort to do more and to be considerate of the emergency situation facing the small island States.

We continue to stress that the vulnerable situation of the small island developing States must be addressed through the vigorous implementation of the actions called for in the Mauritius Strategy for the Further Implementation of the Programme of Action for the Sustainable Development of Small Island Developing States.

We call for the full implementation of the mandates contained in the Millennium Declaration, in particular the commitments to development and poverty eradication, the protection of the common environment, and the realization of human rights, democracy and good governance. As a follow-up to the reform commitments emanating from the 2005 Summit, we welcome the reports of the High-level Panel and of the Secretary-General on system-wide coherence, and we hope for the strengthened capacity of the United Nations in development, humanitarian assistance and the environment.

The adoption of the Global Counter-Terrorism Strategy by the General Assembly was an important achievement. It will be meaningless, however, if we do not address its full implementation. Small States like Dominica and the rest of the States members of the Organization of the Eastern Caribbean States must be assisted to meet the various obligations required by the implementation of the counter-terrorism conventions.

As a country with an indigenous Kalinago population, Dominica is proud to have played a role in the negotiation process that led to the recent adoption of the United Nations Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous People, and we call on those Member States that have not yet done so to embrace the Declaration.

Dominica applauds the African Union for its unwavering efforts towards the maintenance of peace and security on the African continent, and we are supportive of the long-term vision of an African peace and security architecture. In that context, Dominica welcomes the creation of the African Union-United Nations Hybrid Operation in Darfur, which we hope will contribute to the political resolution of the conflict there and bring to an end its tragic humanitarian consequences in the Sudan and the neighbouring States.

In our region, we welcome the continuing engagement of the United Nations and the Organization of American States in Haiti. We urge the United Nations to make the commitment to going beyond the current engagement through the United Nations Stabilization Mission in Haiti (MINUSTAH) to a longer-term engagement that will bring sustainable economic stability and development to Haiti. We appreciate the important role of Brazil and the other Member States that are participating in MINUSTAH, but we must be careful not to see those interventions as the emergency response of an international fire brigade quickly extinguishing political conflagrations and remaining only long enough to dampen the embers of renewed conflict.

Haiti's problems stem from underdevelopment and extensive periods of dictatorship. It is in democracy and development, therefore, that the solutions for Haiti lie. A stable and prosperous Haiti will significantly strengthen the Caribbean Community and contribute meaningfully to the process of deepening regional integration and the attendant march towards the Caribbean single market and economy.

Recent violent upheavals in Myanmar are not encouraging for the hoped-for resolution of the long-standing difficulties afflicting that country in its transition to democracy. We urge influential countries in South-East Asia that have friendly relations with the military regime in Rangoon to use their good offices in support of the United Nations effort to bring about a political solution and national reconciliation among all concerned parties.

The continued presence of the Republic of France, the Kingdom of the Netherlands, the United Kingdom and the United States of America in the Caribbean should provide an opportunity for the strategic engagement of those metropoles, Canada and Spain with the independent Caribbean States to create in the Caribbean a zone of peace, security and prosperity, complementing the invaluable development assistance of the People's Republic of China, the Republic of Cuba, the Bolivarian Republic of Venezuela, Japan and the European Union.

I wish to underscore the vital importance of a fair global trading system as the only way for small States to survive in this globalized world. We do not want to depend on fast-disappearing development assistance. We want to have the assurance that we will be able to trade the goods and services we produce on terms and conditions that will enable us to build our economies and to provide employment for our citizens. That is why we continue to call for the earliest possible conclusion of the Doha Development Round of the World Trade Organization (WTO). We urge the major trading nations to demonstrate a spirit of compromise and constructiveness, backed by a genuine will to commit to a balanced agreement that embraces the principle of special and differential treatment for small island developing States and places development at the centre of any final agreement.

Dominica has made important progress in its quest to adapt to the challenges of trade liberalization and its attendant preference erosion. Those changing terms of trade have progressively devastated our primary source of foreign exchange earnings — the export of bananas. That persistent assault on our banana exports to the European Union through unrelenting recourse to the WTO dispute settlement body has impacted negatively on our overall economy. As a result, we have had to undergo a structural adjustment programme and undertake stringent fiscal measures that have required sacrifices by the population as a whole in order to stabilize the deteriorating fiscal and economic position. We have turned the corner and returned to a period of sustained economic growth, and are moving steadily to the diversification of our economy. The impact of Hurricane Dean so soon afterwards will therefore be doubly devastating.

We are working towards a new energy regime that will significantly reduce our dependence on fossil fuels for our energy needs and slow the haemorrhaging of scarce foreign exchange earnings to meet the ever-rising cost of petroleum products. We plan to increase our current 40-per cent renewable energy generation from hydropower through initiatives for geothermal energy development and further expansion of hydropower. We will need the continuing partnership of the development partners to remain on that path towards successful economic transformation.

May I call on the United Nations once more to rededicate itself to making development the highest priority of this body. Together, the developed countries and the developing countries must work in a cooperative manner to address the challenges of climate change and sustainable development. We can work together to defeat poverty and underdevelopment and to give hope and dignity to all peoples. To achieve that, we must implement the decisions that we take here in this General Assembly every year. The time for action is now.

The Acting President: I now give the floor to His Excellency The Honourable Natanaera Kirata, Minister of Public Works and Utilities of the Republic of Kiribati.

Mr. Kirata (Kiribati): I bring warm greetings from my Government and the people of the Republic of Kiribati, on whose behalf I am honoured and privileged to address this important gathering this afternoon.

Allow me to join preceding speakers in offering my sincere congratulations to Mr. Kerim on his election as President of the General Assembly at its sixty-second session. I am confident that with his wisdom, experience and diplomatic skill, he will steer the course of this Assembly to a successful conclusion. Let me assure him that Kiribati pledges its full support to him in the performance of his challenging task.

I take this opportunity to also extend my appreciation to his predecessor for the exemplary way in which she guided the proceedings of the sixty-first session of the General Assembly.

I wish to commend as well the Secretary-General and members of his team in the Secretariat for their perseverance and relentless efforts in pursuit of the goals of the United Nations. In particular, I congratulate the Secretary-General on his sterling leadership of this Organization since taking over his top and challenging job at the beginning of this year.

Our world is confronted more than ever with a number of serious threats and major challenges. Every year, we all come together from different parts of the world to this beautiful city of New York with our hopes of finding practical and workable solutions to those challenges. Indeed, situations in some regions of the world show no sign of improvement and are further confronted by crises that have proven difficult to settle. Those challenges affect us each as individual countries, small and big, rich and poor, developing and developed. In a world characterized by globalization and interdependence, the need for the human family to undertake constructive and sustained cooperation has become more urgent.

With the growing complexity and uncertainty of events in this world of ours, especially in the context of globalization and with the emergence of new challenges to peace and security, the fulfilment of the role of the United Nations remains critical. Kiribati remains committed to supporting the reform of the United Nations.

We continue to believe that the reform of this Organization is in the best interests of humanity, and we would like to see the reform processes move forward and be concluded as early as practicable in order for the Organization to be able to respond effectively to today's challenges to global peace, security and economic and social progress.

Seeking peace and economic development represents the common wish of all nations. Without global peace there can be little positive development in our countries. Kiribati is committed, within its resource and capacity constraints, to working closely with other like-minded countries in pursuit of world peace and stability, economic development and progress of mankind. As the only universal multilateral international organization, the United Nations remains the best forum for allowing all States to come together to resolve problems of a global character, regardless of their size or wealth.

States Members of the United Nations are all too aware that globalization has brought us all to a point at which everything is interconnected and the well-being of almost every citizen is affected by global developments. Events that happen in one part of the world have a direct bearing on the rest of the world.

Sometimes however, we are all affected and involved in a much more substantial way. Like other least developed countries and small island developing States, Kiribati has so many constraints. Our very remoteness from world market centres, narrow economic base and high population growth rates are factors that we must contend with. The continuing sharp increase in world oil prices and our total reliance on imported oil and fossil fuel has already put a lot of pressure on our economy. Our options for containing the adverse impact of increasing world oil prices are very limited. We must also contend with the HIV/AIDS pandemic and tuberculosis, among others, which require the diversion of the already meagre resources we have at our disposal to finance our development.

Those complex economic situations of ours will continue to undermine our efforts and determination to realize the achievement of the Millennium Development Goals and other internationally agreed development goals. In order to be able to realize our aspirations to attaining sustainable economic development and to sharing the benefits of globalization, Kiribati would like to call on the international community to look at a new global strategy that would create an enabling economic environment for the most disadvantaged States Members of this noble institution, such as my own.

Even with those complex economic development challenges, we are forced to operate in an environment of uncertainty. I say "uncertainty" as our very survival as a nation and as a people with a distinct culture and way of life is at great risk, as we are being threatened by global warming and sea-level rise.

Our islands are widely dispersed and small; most rise barely over 0.2 metres above mean sea level. For countries such as Kiribati, global warming and sea-level rise are critical security concerns. Those concerns are ones that we, as individual countries and as members of this collective body, need to continue to work together to address.

We will continue to call on the international community to agree on a unified global response to those environment issues. We will also continue to work with like-minded countries in pushing the case for a unified global response to those issues. As a small country, Kiribati places great confidence on the international community for its survival, and we hope that our repeated appeals to this body to address that critical issue will receive stronger political support and commitment this time. There is no more time to debate

the issue, as climate change is now a fact of life. It is now time to put words into action so that this living planet is protected from complete destruction and preserved for use by our many generations to come.

We wish to commend the Secretary-General for his initiative in calling the high-level event on climate change on 24 September this year. That in itself means a lot to those who are now living under the cloud of desperation, fear and uncertainty. We remain confident that further meaningful actions will follow and that consensus will soon be achieved on finding a global solution to climate change before it is too late.

Terrorism is an ongoing concern that affects all countries large and small. Kiribati condemns terrorism in all its various forms and manifestations and will continue to support the global fight against terrorism.

This time last year, Kiribati joined other States Members of the United Nations in expressing our disappointment over the continued neglect and rejection of the desire of the 23 million people of Taiwan to join this Organization. It is further saddening to note that Taiwan's request for admission this year was again not given a fair opportunity to be heard by the General Assembly.

With a population of 23 million, giving it the forty-seventh largest population in the world, Taiwan has continued to respect and abide by the United Nations Charter based on the principles of democracy, mutual respect and understanding. We feel that Taiwan and its 23 million people deserve justice from this noble institution. It is Kiribati's fervent hope that Taiwan will one day be given the nod to assume its rightful place in this highly respected Organization.

Let us all work together to make this world a better place — a place where citizens of all of our nations can live together in harmony, peace, security and prosperity for many years to come.

The Acting President: I now give the floor to His Excellency Mr. Hussein Elabe Fahiye, Minister for Foreign Affairs and International Cooperation of the Somali Republic.

Mr. Fahiye (Somalia): It is indeed an honour for me to extend to Mr. Kerim the sincere congratulations of the Government of Somalia upon his election to the presidency of the General Assembly. His tenure comes at a crucial period for the international community as tensions and instability have surfaced and the United Nations has also embarked on a series of world-changing reforms. My delegation is confident that he will rise to the challenges and steer this body competently during the sixty-second session.

Fitting tribute is also due to his predecessor, Sheikha Haya Rashed Al-Khalifa, for her sterling guidance and exemplary way of steering the proceedings of the sixty-first session of the General Assembly during some of the most trying times for the United Nations.

Permit me also to express on behalf of the Transitional Federal Government of Somalia my sincere felicitations to the new Secretary-General, Mr. Ban Ki-moon, who has had a distinguished career in international diplomacy and who brings that extensive experience to the United Nations. Those skills will be crucial in his new assignment. We are confident that he will be a beacon of hope in keeping the United Nations ideal alive during the years ahead.

May I also take this opportunity to congratulate Ms. Asha-Rose Migiro on her appointment to the High Office of Deputy Secretary-General.

The President returned to the Chair.

One of the major principles of the United Nations Charter is to maintain peace and security, and to that end to take effective measures for the prevention and removal of breaches to world peace and security. It is in that conviction that I appear before this body to underscore the concerns of the Federal Government of Somalia on political and security matters related to the roles that should be assumed by the international community.

Regrettably, we feel that our major efforts in nation-building and State-institution development have met with an unreceptive response and reticence of an inexplicable nature. Collective action by this world body has been more consistent and vigorous, until very recently, in coming to the rescue of nations in dire need of help. A case in point concerning that incomprehensible attitude is the long-delayed adoption of a resolution on the timely deployment of a peacekeeping mission in Somalia. If that stand continues, it will reveal only a lack of commitment and indirect acquiescence to prolonging the agony of the Somali people. We call upon the United Nations to come out without delay in support of the deployment of the multinational forces.

The Transitional Federal Government of Somalia has diligently embarked on implementing the tasks mandated by our Charter before the end of the transitional period in 2009. Those include, among other things, securing democratic transformation, putting in place permanent constitutional legality, establishing a multi-party democratic society, and setting up regional autonomous administrations. The federal institutions in charge of that arduous task are working hard to provide the nation with a federal constitution that upholds those fundamental obligations, thus signalling a new era of tranquillity for the Somali people.

The efforts of the Federal Government culminated in the convening of a peace and national reconciliation conference in Somalia this year, indicating that national consciousness is regenerating within our society and a self-healing process has begun.

Despite disruptive intimidations by terrorist elements that tried to hijack the proceedings, the conference came to a successful conclusion. Representatives of all walks of life in the Somali community attended the conference and dealt with issues of concern in every aspect. In that regard, we pay special tribute to the helping hand of the Ethiopian forces and the Uganda-led African Union Mission in Somalia, which effectively dealt with the terrorists, who are gradually fading away.

Here, I wish to underscore that peace, security and the well-being and prosperity of individuals and nations alike are at stake in the fight against terrorism. It is our view that the only viable response to terrorism is a collective response of all nations, and it is for that reason that the United Nations system has a pivotal role to play and vital contributions to make in many aspects of counter-terrorism, from promoting the rule of law and effective criminal justice systems to ensuring that countries have the means to counter terrorism. No other institution has the means to unify nations in the fight against that evil, and there is no better venue for nations to forge their protective measures.

Our efforts aimed at nation-building, restoring peace and stability, conflict resolution, reconstruction and rehabilitation cannot have the expected impact unless the required funding resources and the needed equipment and supplies are made available as the days of institutional disharmony are replaced by an immense aspiration to rebuild the country. We therefore reiterate our repeated calls for a pledging conference, and appeal to the donor community to show serious commitment to organizing and convening an international donor conference, in coordination with the Transitional Federal Government of Somalia.

Another area that cries out for speedy action is the humanitarian needs in Somalia. As members are all aware, the protracted civil war and persistent fragmented conflicts over the past two decades have been exacerbated by natural disasters that have not only devastated public and private institutions, but have also torn the socio-economic fabric of society and contributed to grave humanitarian crises. We appeal to the world community to make generous contributions and to work closely with the Somali authorities to ensure that humanitarian access is provided to the most vulnerable populations. Meeting those humanitarian needs will ultimately provide a strong foundation from which recovery, reconstruction and development can emerge in the future.

This historical moment requires bold initiatives on the part of the President of the General Assembly, who, in tandem with the Secretary-General, is called upon to provide the vision and strength of conviction necessary to carry the United Nations forward to face the myriad challenges to the Organization. We are confident that, by working together closely, we can and shall meet the challenges ahead.

The President: I now give the floor to His Excellency Mr. Gonzalo Gutiérrez Reinel, Deputy Minister and Secretary-General for Foreign Affairs of the Republic of Peru.

Mr. Gutiérrez Reinel (Peru) (*spoke in Spanish*): For Peru, Sir, your election as President of the General Assembly at its sixty-second session is a guarantee of experience and exceptional work. I am convinced that your performance will strengthen the principles of dialogue and coordination that guide the efforts of the United Nations to attain realistic commitments that contribute to well-being in the daily life of humankind.

On 15 August, an earthquake occurred in the city of Pisco, seriously impacting the southern populations of Peru, claiming priceless human lives and causing great material damage. The Peruvian people deeply appreciates the immediate and generous response of the international community, as well as the speedy action of the United Nations Office for the

Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs. The Office's support showed that united action can make a difference in a crisis situation and contributed to the Government's activities in attending to the urgent needs of the victims. Our sincere recognition goes to the cooperation received, which is now being channelled by my country's Fund for Southern Reconstruction.

The stabilization and growth of the Peruvian economy over the past 76 months have generated national and international confidence and expectation. We are convinced that the investment and participation of our productive forces will allow us to maintain continuous growth and to exploit the opportunity to enhance a model and national project of social tranquillity and development.

In the first year of his Government, President of the Republic Alan García has laid the foundations for greater dynamic growth in the country. We must now consolidate and give practical and positive content to the democracy, governance and economic stabilization of the country in order to allow the growth indices to generate national confidence and participation that can be converted into transparency, equity, justice and social peace.

The struggle against poverty and inequity is the most formidable current challenge to the national and foreign policies of Peru. In the conviction that the dignity of human beings and their welfare are at the core of governmental management, and that economic indicators should be based on the well-being of our population without distinction, the Government of Peru has redefined its social policy through a concept of productive inclusion, access to education and technological innovations, territorial institutional development and support for the population. To that end, we have begun implementing a national strategy of rural development and a national strategy of food security to address chronic child malnutrition. Important road infrastructure works will complement the incorporation of the Peruvian Andes and Amazonia into the development of the country.

Towards the fulfilment of the Millennium Development Goals, Peru has set itself the concrete goal of reducing the current level of poverty from 50 per cent to 30 per cent by 2011. Chronic malnutrition will be reduced from 25 per cent to 16 per cent, and the provision of potable water and electricity will be extended to 90 per cent of citizens. Likewise, we plan to eradicate illiteracy, reduce employment in the informal sector from 53 per cent to 35 per cent, create 1.5 million jobs, and reduce the external debt from 24 per cent to 13 per cent of the gross domestic product.

The Government's new direction in State action is focused on decentralization. The strategic decentralization plan goes beyond the mere transfer of resources or the execution of public works in the interior of the country. The regions can now coordinate their own development plan, efficiently distribute more than 80 per cent of the national budget, interlink and gradually integrate Peru as a whole, and promote the better distribution of the population and income through a process of national institutionalization that supports optimal care of the environment.

Peru has become one of the emerging countries of the region thanks to the continuous growth of its economy over the past eight years. Its strategic location in the South American Pacific, the full force of a modern legal framework that encourages investment and exports, the diversity of its natural resources, its growing diversification in the global markets, and its political and macroeconomic stability are factors that ensure a development process of genuine social inclusion.

Much remains to do. In the face of the uncertainty of the Doha Round negotiations and a cautious evaluation of the effective possibilities of integration in the Andean subregion and Latin America, Peru is striving to conclude free trade treaties with its major commercial partners that will complement regional and subregional integration schemes and multilateral trade negotiations. In the Andean Community — comprised of Peru, Colombia, Ecuador and Bolivia — Peru has an up-to-date free-trade zone. Likewise, Peru has entered into free-trade treaties with Chile and the United States, and is negotiating similar instruments with Canada and Mexico. Negotiations with the Central American countries are scheduled to begin shortly. We have finished negotiating a free-trade agreement with Singapore, negotiations with Thailand have reached an "early harvest" agreement, and we have begun to negotiate a free-trade agreement with the People's Republic of China. Likewise, the negotiation of an agreement of association between the Andean Community and the European Union has begun. Our priorities are now to pursue negotiations with Korea, Japan, India, Russia, Australia and New Zealand.

Our objectives are clear: to ensure access to the markets of our main commercial partners; to establish fair and predictable commercial rules and regulations that complement the standards of the World Trade Organization; to diversify the markets for our exports of goods and services; and to attract investment and technologies to modernize our productive structure, reduce the technology gap, and modernize Peru's physical infrastructure in order to increase its competitiveness.

Following on the results of a regressive utopian experiment in Latin America, we are convinced that Peru's model of integration into the global economy, while consolidating regional economic expansion, will allow us to ensure the participation of the large majority of our people in the system's benefits, with concrete improvements in their daily lives. It will thereby contribute to the people's sense of belonging to their social institutions and of full citizenship, as well as to their perception of themselves as agents of social-economic change and to the consolidation of the democratic system.

In the framework of such integration, my country is also assuming growing international responsibilities. In our efforts to foment dialogue, we are deeply honoured to be able to organize a summit of heads of State and Government of Latin America and the Caribbean and the European Union, as well as the summit of the Asia-Pacific Economic Cooperation Forum, both of which will take place in Peru in 2008.

Formidable technological advances, especially in the information field; the emergence of new powers; energy insecurity; climate change; growing inequity and poverty; and new challenges to international security characterize a changing and ever-more complex international scene to which States and international institutions must adapt. Global society is interlinked through productive processes, trade, financial flows, the digital telecommunications revolution, and so on.

In this complicated scenario, Peru is participating in the Security Council and in peacekeeping operations. The Peruvian armed forces are present in the Sudan, the Democratic Republic of the Congo, Ethiopia and Eritrea, Liberia, Côte d'Ivoire and Haiti.

Peru attaches special importance to cooperation with Haiti, having assumed in January the coordination of the Group of Friends of Haiti in the Security Council. In that regard, we support the renewal of the mandate of the United Nations Stabilization Mission in Haiti (MINUSTAH) for a year, as well as the gradual reorientation of its work to promote development, in support of its multidisciplinary and multidimensional work. At present, we are contributing a contingent of Peruvian military officers, which we expect to be able to complement shortly with an engineering corps.

Our permanent representation in New York has presented a draft resolution that, inter alia, reaffirms the urgent call to fulfil the contribution pledges, pursuant to the priorities presented by the Haitian Government, especially for cooperation projects to eradicate poverty, improve basic health services and strengthen national institutions. We expect the draft resolution to enjoy consensus in the Security Council so that the international contribution to Haiti can continue.

Last May, Peru, with the cooperation of Norway and the United Nations Development Programme, organized the Lima Conference on Cluster Munitions, assuming a lead regional role in the endorsement of the Oslo Process. At the Conference, Peru presented to the 69 delegations of the participating countries a proposal to secure a declaration of the Latin-American region as a zone free of cluster munitions, which have indiscriminate effects on civilians. Our initiative already enjoys the support of many countries of our region.

Peru is also committed to effectively implementing the Convention on the Prohibition of the Use, Stockpiling, Production and Transfer of Anti-personnel Mines and on Their Destruction. Peru is in the final stages of preparing a national plan of action against anti-personnel mines with a view to completing the demining process along our northern frontier, in cooperation with the brotherly country of Ecuador.

Moreover, Peru is firmly committed to efforts to attain complete disarmament and the non-proliferation of nuclear, chemical and biological weapons, as well as their delivery systems, which constitute a threat to international peace and security. In that respect, we support the strengthening and universalization of the relevant binding multilateral agreements. In that context, Peru organized a regional seminar on the implementation of Security Council resolution 1540 (2004) in November 2006, in which most countries of the region participated.

The General Assembly is the forum in which the middle-income countries can efficiently contribute to identifying imaginative responses to conflicts and new threats. That is why we resolutely support reform that will strengthen the Assembly and ensure its ability to adapt to change and to the most urgent needs on the international agenda. In order to reinforce the Assembly's legitimacy, we need to sharpen procedures and reduce its agenda. An equal priority is to carry out more effective action against violations of human rights. Security Council reform is needed urgently to make the Council a more efficient, transparent, legitimate and representative body with better working methods. On the Other hand, we also want to highlight the validity of the Economic and Social Council, an essential instrument for promoting greater effectiveness in the coordination of development strategies, as well as assistance in emergencies.

International reality presents many challenges to the universal system for promoting and protecting human rights. There is still a dichotomy between security and individual rights, with a backdrop marked by the poverty and the inequality in which the great majority around the world live and which affect human dignity. The new Human Rights Council and the system integrated into it ought to help in the response to these challenges.

Discussion over the last few days in this Organization shows that climate change is a world problem that requires a collective response from the international community in a framework of a multilateral and worldwide commitment. Through sustainable forest management, Peru has contributed to the global commitment by reducing emissions caused by deforestation. We have also made headway in implementing our National Strategy on Climate Change by strengthening national capacities to maximize human and financial resources. The size of the problem requires an agreement with goals for the emission of greenhouse gases more ambitious than those agreed in the first stage. Peru has great expectations for the next meeting in Bali, and we will work to ensure a common platform that will allow us to very soon begin negotiations to define the new international regime that we hope will be concluded in 2009.

The official launching of the International Year of the Potato will take place at Headquarters on 19 October. This celebration is especially important for my country because the potato has its origin in Peru, and it is the country with the greatest genetic diversity of this product. The cultivation of the potato was developed in ancient times by civilizations that gave rise to the Peru of today and is one of the great contributions to the world's diet. Peru has proclaimed 2008 as the National Year of the Potato and has developed a calendar of multisectoral activities for outreach and research that will be a positive contribution to the work programme of the Food and Agriculture Organization.

I shall conclude by noting that Peru participates actively to ensure and strengthen the United Nations Charter principles and objectives of peace, peaceful coexistence and development, especially in the Security Council and the Human Rights Council. In accordance with this commitment, Peru will continue to promote dialogue and coordination among peoples of the world. It has put forward its candidature for the Economic and Social Council and the Peacebuilding Commission, bodies within the United Nations system where we hope to achieve the support of all members of the Assembly in order to contribute to working towards a safer, more equitable world where development can reach the large majority of populations.

The President: I now give the floor to His Excellency Mr. Yannis Valinakis, Deputy Minister for Foreign Affairs of the of the Hellenic Republic.

Mr. Valinakis (Greece) (*spoke in French*): The great challenges and problems, both global and regional, call for urgent and coherent responses. The responsibilities and the role of the United Nations in raising awareness and in providing unity of direction are now greater and more important. That is exactly why compliance with United Nations resolutions should be a top priority for all, including those are elected to represent the Organization and its agencies.

I should like to congratulate Her Excellency Sheikha Haya Rashed Al-Khalifa — who was only the third woman in the history of the United Nations to occupy the post of President of this Assembly — on her efforts to promote the purpose and principles for which our Organization was founded.

I should also like to express our appreciation to the Secretary-General for his tireless efforts to safeguard international peace and security and for his

keeping alive the authority and role of the Organization in this area.

Greece fully aligns itself with the statement made by the Prime Minister of Portugal on behalf of the European Union. However, we would like to add a few points about the major issues on our agenda for the coming period.

(*spoke in English*)

The end of the Cold War ushered in a new era in international relations in which the threat of military confrontation between the two power blocs dissipated. However, the world community still faces violent internal conflicts, civil wars, genocide and other large-scale atrocities that cause immense destruction and suffering to millions of people.

And yet, conflicts within and between States are not the only threat to international peace and security. New threats and challenges are emerging. Proliferation of weapons of mass destruction is a serious challenge. Organized crime and human trafficking constitute another threat that can have destabilizing effects and fuel civil wars. Extreme poverty in many parts of the world, failing States, large-scale humanitarian disasters, deadly infectious diseases and environmental degradation and catastrophes have devastating consequences.

We applaud the Secretary-General's initiative to hold a high-level event last week to deal with climate change, environmental issues being potentially the greatest threat to our societies. I hope that a global, sustained and comprehensive approach emerges soon to help save our planet, our future, our children's future.

Controlling and coping with climate change is one of the greatest environmental and development challenges. Without swift action to face the problems arising from these challenges, we all risk paying a high and bitter price. We should proceed in a timely manner, through a step-by-step approach, building on national as well as international capacities in order to address the causes, mitigate the effects and create synergies that will allow for specific and measurable results in the near future. A clear indication of the importance Greece attaches to the environment is the fact that the Greek chairmanship of the Human Security Network has decided to focus on climate change and human security.

This summer my country suffered enormously from devastating wildfires. May I take this opportunity, while addressing the international community, to express our deep gratitude and thanks to all those countries and friends who have extended to us their invaluable support, help and assistance.

Working for peace is not an easy task. The pursuit of international peace and stability, if it is to be successful, means that threats have to be addressed in a comprehensive way and that many conditions have to be met. Unresolved conflicts have to be energetically confronted, while, at the same time, we have to deal with situations of deep-seated injustice, inequality, ongoing violence, social exclusion, extreme poverty, famine, illiteracy and cultural misunderstanding.

In addressing the deep-rooted structural problems that fuel conflicts, peacebuilding must bridge security and development. Good governance, the rule of law, strong democratic institutions, respect for human rights and development assistance are critical components in reducing today's conflicts.

Terrorism is undeniably one of the most serious threats to peace and security, menacing the very foundation of our democratic societies, and actions to combat this threat should be in conformity with international human rights standards and fundamental freedoms. The adoption of the Global Counter-Terrorism Strategy by the General Assembly was a major accomplishment, and its full implementation should be an absolute priority for Member States. In this respect, I would like to emphasize the importance that my country attaches to the conclusion of ongoing negotiations for the elaboration of a comprehensive convention against international terrorism; it would be a valuable addition to the counter-terrorism legal framework.

In the face of all the threats and challenges that transcend State borders, we need a more comprehensive concept of collective security, one based on respect and justice as requirements for peace and solidarity as a condition for security, and entailing a commitment from all to promote sustainable development. But above all, we need a commitment to collective political action requiring the strengthening of the United Nations.

The early, comprehensive and coherent prevention of conflicts lies at the heart of the United Nations mandate for the maintenance of international

peace and security. Integrated and long-term strategies to address the root causes of conflict are necessary. The United Nations should therefore be strengthened in its managing, resolving and preventing conflicts and their recurrence. International regional organizations should also be effective in this regard, and international treaties should be respected.

The United Nations was created on the basis of the resolve of all States that collective action was the only basis for taking measures to address our common global problems. We only have common values enshrined in the United Nations Charter that guide our efforts and give us direction to unite around what is just and right — freedom, democracy, human rights, equality, peaceful resolution of conflicts, respect, multiculturalism, tolerance and open societies, and dialogue among neighbours, nations, religions and cultures. Greece's foreign and security policy is based precisely on these principles and values. We are committed to the peaceful settlement of disputes, the upholding of international law, including international humanitarian law, and promoting good neighbourly relations.

I deeply regret to note that, 33 years after the Turkish invasion in 1974, the Republic of Cyprus remains a divided island. Turkey continues to occupy part of a United Nations and European Union (EU) Member State with over 40,000 troops, violating United Nations resolutions and international law. Our steadfast objective remains the withdrawal of all occupation troops and the reunification of the island, in the context of a bizonal, bicommunal federation. To this end, the relevant United Nations resolutions and the EU principles and values provide a clear framework for a comprehensive settlement agreed upon by the two communities.

Greece has consistently welcomed the United Nations initiatives for finding a just and viable solution to the Cyprus question. In this vein, we strongly support the rapid implementation of the 8 July 2006 agreement, which was reached under United Nations auspices. We shall continue to do everything possible to assist the two communities to find an agreed solution, not least because it would significantly enhance the development of friendship and cooperation between Greece and Turkey. We strongly urge Turkey to demonstrate the necessary will and flexibility towards this direction.

Our foreign policy is based on the principles of international law and the United Nations Charter. It is in this spirit that we approach our relations with neighbouring Turkey. Greece has taken specific steps and initiatives to continue broadening and strengthening our cooperation with Turkey in all fields. Lately, it has grown even further in the economic field, but also in the energy sector. We believe that a democratic Turkey with a clear European orientation, a Turkey that meets the European criteria and requirements set out in the negotiating framework with the European Union, can be a factor for stability in our part of the world. That is why we support Turkey's European aspirations. Turkey, however, must concretely demonstrate its unequivocal commitment to the principles of good neighbourly relations and peaceful settlement of disputes with all its neighbours. In any case, from the outset Greece has repeatedly stated that Turkey's full compliance should lead to full membership.

Good neighbourly relations are the cornerstone upon which the countries of South-East Europe must build a common European future of peace, stability and prosperity. The European perspective of the countries of our region has been a strategic choice for Greece. Our vision is to transform our neighbourhood into a region that is like the rest of Europe — an area of peace, democracy and prosperity. As the oldest member of the EU and NATO in the region, my country works intensively and constructively to create the necessary conditions of good neighbourliness, mutual understanding and stability in the Balkans.

Enhancing regional cooperation, establishing good neighbourly relations and finding mutually acceptable solutions to outstanding issues with neighbouring countries are fundamental prerequisites for further integration of the aspirant countries of South-East Europe into the Euro-Atlantic institutions. Provocative acts and statements with irredentist connotations are incompatible with United Nations principles and common European values. They poison the necessary climate of understanding between our peoples, and they are contrary to the European concept. In this context, Security Council resolutions 817 (1993) and 845 (1993), calling for a mutually acceptable solution to the name issue of the former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia, need to be respected in practice by all.

Our efforts to secure a truly European future for the Balkans will remain inconclusive if we fail to reach a viable and sustainable settlement for Kosovo's future status. We remain convinced that this goal can be met only if, first, effective compromises between the two parties are achieved in the course of the ongoing negotiations and, secondly, if the settlement is legitimized through a Security Council resolution. In any case, this is par excellence a European problem, and the role of the European Union in this issue is essential.

I cannot think of any conflict that has held the unwavering attention of so many for so long as the one in the Middle East. We are all aware of the multifaceted challenges that we face in this part of the world. And we all agree that the nature of these challenges is such that they affect not only the peoples of the region, but the entire international community. Despite the variances that we observe among us, there is one crucial element that is common to all, and that is the need to achieve a just and lasting peace in the Middle East based on a two-State solution that will guarantee security, mutual respect and a fair future for all. This is our common goal, and Greece is deeply committed to it.

The progress Africa has been making in recent years is both substantial and undeniable. It is characterized by economic growth, crisis management and a will for conflict prevention. The United Nations, deeply involved in peacekeeping and providing developmental assistance, has found in the African Union and the African regional organizations a vital partner for the success of this process. Partnership between the United Nations and the African Union, as well as the African regional organizations, could well be the key to successfully overcoming the challenges facing Africa today. In this context, we welcome the creation of the joint African Union/United Nations Hybrid Operation in Darfur (UNAMID), which, by combining forces of the United Nations and of the African Union, shows the way to the future for Darfur and for the continent as a whole.

International development cooperation is one of the priorities of Greek foreign policy. Our national development agency, Hellenic Aid, implements the United Nations Millennium Development Goals in the framework set out by the European Union and the principles followed by the Development Assistance Committee of the Organisation for Economic Cooperation and Development, while focusing on our cultural heritage. Our humanitarian and development projects in 46 countries aim at combating poverty, disease, malnutrition, lack of access to drinking water, and dealing with the consequences of natural disasters and conflict situations, while safeguarding the protection of human rights. We strive to address the root causes of illegal immigration, human trafficking and terrorism, since enforcement measures alone are not enough to address those problems. In 2005, Greece allocated $384.22 million to finance actions to the benefit of our partner countries in the developing world. In Africa, development assistance, ranging from humanitarian aid to HIV/AIDS care and refugee programmes, was offered to almost 20 African States.

On all the issues I have referred to, my country is committed to assisting the United Nations and to cooperating with all individual Member States in order to achieve peace and prosperity for all peoples of the world.

The President: I now give the floor to His Excellency Mr. Anders Lidén, Chairman of the delegation of the Kingdom of Sweden.

Mr. Lidén (Sweden): Let me take this opportunity to express our strong support for the people of Burma in their struggle for a democratic future. We strongly urge the Burmese Government to initiate a peaceful dialogue, resist all violence and respect the human rights of the Burmese people, not least their freedom of expression and assembly.

There is little doubt — and this has been highlighted by all speakers during the last few days — that we, the international community, the United Nations, face major challenges in the years ahead. When addressing them, we should also be aware of the progress that has been achieved in the world in recent decades.

The accelerated globalization process has brought enormous benefits to many hundreds of millions of people, not least in the emerging economies. Today, nearly a third of the world's population live in countries where economic growth is about 10 per cent a year, and we seem to be well on our way towards meeting that important part of the Millennium Development Goals that will reduce by half the number of people living in absolute poverty around the world.

From a historical perspective, that is amazing progress. Never before in human history have so many been lifted out of absolute poverty in such a short space of time. There is no room for complacency, however. We must make globalization a force for good, for open societies, open economies and an open world for everyone on our planet. We must redouble our efforts to bring the Doha Development Round to a successful conclusion. Sustainable economic growth, a vibrant private sector and a more open international trading system are needed if we are to achieve the goals we have set for eradicating poverty in the world.

Aid for trade is a crucial complement to the opening up of markets for many countries. The developing countries of the world represent far too small a share of world trade. We must live up to the international commitments on development assistance and ensure that development cooperation becomes more efficient. That is the joint responsibility of all donors and all partner countries. The Swedish Government has initiated extensive reforms aimed at creating a new Swedish development assistance policy characterized by quality, efficiency and results in terms of reduced poverty and more democratic societies. We must now – as was highlighted last week — accelerate our efforts to address the challenge of climate change. The Swedish Government has launched a Commission on Climate Change and Development to address risk reduction, adaptation and climate-proofing development. We must make a dedicated mutual effort to meet the Millennium Development Goals. The fact that we are making substantial progress on all of them globally demonstrates that progress is indeed possible.

Human rights, security and development go hand in hand. Respect for human rights is necessary to achieve security and development, and those three elements are mutually reinforcing. Our protection of any individual anywhere is the protection of all individuals everywhere.

The death penalty must be abolished all over the world. It contravenes the very notion of human rights. Even in that area, the world is making progress, but 25 countries still sentence people to death. Six countries are responsible for more than 90 per cent of all executions worldwide. We all know who they are and expect them to take steps to abolish the death penalty.

The links between security and development, including the need to combine State-building efforts and peace-support operations for long-lasting results, place new demands on the international community. The United Nations must learn from and build on the recent experiences of a number of challenging but successful large-scale missions that integrate military and civilian components. We need to improve coordination of international efforts in the field, for instance in Afghanistan.

There are many challenges that remain to be tackled if we are to make the world a better place. Perhaps the most important is how we should best address the present threats to the existing non-proliferation regime. Were there to be one new State with nuclear weapons, the danger is that another would soon follow. Shortly, those weapons might well be out of any State's control. The risk of nuclear terrorism would be a very real one. That must be prevented. Our children deserve to live in a world safe from the threat of nuclear war and of weapons of mass destruction falling into the hands of terrorists. Those weapons threaten the very existence of mankind.

To prevent that, the nuclear Powers have a duty to live up to their responsibilities. To neglect is to invite failure. They need to demonstrate their readiness to substantially reduce their nuclear arsenals. Those weapons are of no use in deterring the adversaries we might face if the non-proliferation regime is eroded or collapses. It is a question of self-interest and far-sighted statesmanship.

But we must also address the urgent political issues that we are confronted with. Although the numbers of wars and conflicts have continued to decline, we should be acutely aware of the dangers of conflicts rapidly exploding, fusing together and unravelling the progress we have seen. Let me address two of those: the situation in the Middle East and the conflicts in Africa.

The Israeli-Palestinian conflict has to end with a peaceful settlement negotiated by the parties, resulting in the emergence of an independent, democratic and viable Palestinian State living side by side in peace and security with Israel and other neighbours. Restoring peace and economic growth in the Middle East requires parallel action by the Israelis and the Palestinians. Nothing is more important for the long-term security of Israel than the creation of a truly viable Palestinian

State. That will require freedom of movement and access to be significantly improved in the West Bank and Gaza. Prime Minister Olmert and President Abbas recognize each other as partners for peace. That provides an opening that we should all do our utmost to support.

It is therefore now time for a true peace process, and not of the incremental sort that has been tried so many times before. It is now time to achieve the peace that is the common aspiration of the vast majority of Israelis and Palestinians alike, as well as of the international community.

We urge the leaders of Israel and Palestine to move forward towards a comprehensive settlement. The international meeting this autumn is of crucial importance. But the challenges of the Middle East are not limited to that conflict.

We are convinced that we must do more to encourage reconciliation and reconstruction in Iraq after the horrible brutalities of the last few decades. We must do much more to assist and protect the more than 4 million Iraqis who have left their homes.

Iran still refuses to accept the obligations laid down by the Security Council. Iran has to convince us of the peaceful nature of its nuclear programme.

The conflicts on the Horn of Africa, stretching from Ethiopia and Eritrea to Somalia, the Sudan, Chad and the Central African Republic, cause thousands upon thousands of deaths as well as untold human suffering for the survivors. National leaders on the Horn should rise to the challenge and demonstrate their commitment to peace and reconciliation. The failure of Ethiopia and Eritrea to resolve the quite straightforward demarcation of their common border, eight years after their commitment to do so, is a worrying signal, not only for these two countries, but also for the region as a whole.

In the Sudan, a process of democratization is of paramount importance to tackle the core problems and to achieve reconciliation. We must focus on support for the implementation of the Comprehensive Peace Agreement as well as the renewed peace effort for Darfur that will take place in Tripoli at the end of the month.

The situation in eastern Chad is worrying. We are impressed by the important humanitarian work carried out by local and international non-governmental organizations. It is apparent that we must do more to protect and assist refugees, internally displaced persons and other civilians affected by the conflicts of the region, as well as support the United Nations-led humanitarian efforts on both sides of the border.

How can we ever achieve true progress if women's crucial role in peacebuilding and development is not recognized? Gender equality and women's rights, participation, influence and empowerment are key goals in themselves, and are also crucial for sustainable poverty reduction.

Challenges like these show the urgent need for world leaders to accept shared responsibility for our common future. Sweden addresses these challenges in close cooperation with its European Union partners. We need a strong — and reformed — United Nations to bring us all together. A better world is within our reach.

The President: I now give the floor to His Excellency Mr. Carsten Staur, chairman of the delegation of the Kingdom of Denmark.

Mr. Staur (Denmark): At the Millennium Summit in 2000, an unprecedented number of world leaders came together and committed themselves to an ambitious global agenda for the years ahead. This agenda was further reinforced at the 2005 World Summit, where we also adopted the far-reaching principle of responsibility to protect.

By the very nature of the commitments from the Millennium Declaration and the World Summit, it was globally recognized that there can be no development without security and human rights — and vice versa. We owe it to ourselves and to the world community to take stock of our progress. How well, then, have we met this challenge so far?

At the institutional level, there can be no question that important progress has been achieved, as witnessed by the establishment of the Central Emergency Response Fund, the Peacebuilding Commission and the Human Rights Council. But institution-building alone will not do. We need to show the necessary resolve to make these new institutions effective instruments in the service of the global community. We have achieved little if we do not endeavour to ensure that they fulfil their stated purposes and that they realize their true potential. Our

challenge now is to address the substantive issues and to do so in earnest.

As we cross the halfway mark towards 2015, substantial progress has been made at the global level towards achieving the Millennium Development Goals (MDGs). The results achieved through market-oriented economic reform in Asia and Latin America over the past decade prove that eradication of poverty is not an elusive, unattainable goal.

But, again, there is no room for complacency. A substantial increase in efforts is still needed, especially if sub-Saharan Africa is to meet the Millennium Development Goals by 2015. The facts are quite simple. If progress in Africa is not accelerated, we will not live up to our responsibility. Denmark believes that the time has come to arrange a United Nations summit focusing on the progress towards the Millennium Development Goals and on financing for development.

Africa remains at the heart of Danish development assistance. The Danish Government firmly believes that development assistance to Africa should increase. We need to live up to the promise to double aid for Africa by 2010. Denmark is keeping its part of the bargain. We are committed to providing 0.8 per cent of our national income in development assistance. Two thirds of our bilateral assistance will go to the African continent.

But clearly, development assistance alone is not enough. Trade and good governance is key to development. There is no substitute for national ownership and for national commitment to good governance or for transparent and liberal trade and investment regimes that allow developing countries to benefit from globalization.

It is a key goal for the Danish Government to promote good governance, democracy and human rights with no impunity for crimes against humanity and we will do this through an active foreign policy. Denmark will seriously do its best to contribute to a more effective United Nations and to assist countries that have a strong commitment to development but lack the necessary resources.

Climate change has undoubtedly become one of the most urgent global challenges of our times, one that, by its very definition, must be dealt with on a truly global level. Climate change will affect the poorest and the weakest the most. And countries will have a very different capacity to act. Therefore, we have to base our joint efforts on the notion of common but differentiated responsibilities.

Denmark is pleased to host the fifteenth Conference of the Parties to the Convention on Climate Change, to be held in December 2009. We have already commenced the preparations for the conference. Our ambitions are high. We must reach consensus on an effective and multilateral post-Kyoto agreement. The Climate Change Conference in Copenhagen is the last call if the agreement is to enter into force by 2012.

We commend the Secretary-General for his leadership on this issue. In our view, an inclusive United Nations-based multilateral approach is crucial if we are to bring all parties together in responding to the global climate challenge.

The High-level Event on Climate Change held here in New York last week was an illustration of this commitment. I want to echo two essential points made at the High-level Event that were also taken up by the Secretary-General in his conclusions. First, I would note that the Conference of the Parties to take place in Bali next December represents a crucial cut-off date. If we are serious about fighting climate change, the thirteenth Conference of the Parties to the Convention on Climate Change in Bali must define a clear timetable for negotiations towards a comprehensive post-2012 framework. Secondly, I would note that the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change (UNFCCC) remains the only legitimate framework for truly global negotiations on climate change. It is within the UNFCCC that an ambitious agreement must be reached to reduce global emissions and to counter climate change.

Another major global challenge to which Denmark attaches great importance is to obtain equal opportunities for women. Here, we also see a crucial role for an effective United Nations where gender equality is dealt with in a strengthened and systematic way, especially at the country level. In our view, no one should be excluded from contributing to peace, freedom and development. It is, therefore, of paramount importance — as a judicial, moral and ethical responsibility — that women everywhere have the same opportunities as men. In the fight against poverty, it is an absolute necessity. Women must have equal rights as well as full access to employment, land and financial resources. Only then can development

assistance realize its true potential and poverty be alleviated.

Donors must actively support partner countries in achieving gender equality. In the coming years, Denmark will have a strong focus on women and their role in development and conflict resolution — setting goals, earmarking funds and monitoring progress to ensure that policies create results.

Making a difference in that respect will require leadership from all parties. Without addressing the role of women, we will never manage to halve extreme poverty by 2015. And our efforts to support the rights and empowerment of women must be complemented by a targeted effort to promote sexual and reproductive health and rights.

As we stand here today, we face more global challenges than ever before. The world faces many unresolved conflicts, not least in Africa. We need to stay focused and to enhance the Organization's capacity in conflict prevention, conflict management and peacebuilding.

A strong United Nations is required to cope with the global challenges of today and tomorrow. Only a strong and effective United Nations can show the necessary political leadership with regard to development, humanitarian crisis and conflicts.

In the Sudan, we have an obligation to help the people of Darfur achieve peace through the restoration of stability. The killings, violence and atrocities must end. This has taken far too long. There is now finally some progress in the attempts to find a solution to the conflict in Darfur, and we have a responsibility to ensure that it is implemented. Denmark actively supports the African Union-United Nations Hybrid Operation in Darfur as well as the resumed political process. It raises real hope for improvement in the deplorable situation on the ground and in the prospects for a long-term political solution. As part of this process, we must implement the arrest warrants of the International Criminal Court and bring perpetrators of crime to justice.

Afghanistan must be one of the top priorities of the international community and of the United Nations. It is important to maintain broad consensus among all international partners regarding the need to carry through what we have started. To that end, we need the United Nations to play a stronger role in Afghanistan. A coordinated engagement — civilian as well as military — is a precondition for success. The United Nations Assistance Mission in Afghanistan (UNAMA) must use its full potential to coordinate the international efforts and as a counterpart to the Afghans. And UNAMA should be present in each and every province, including in the south.

In Kosovo, only a solution to the final-status issue will ensure stability and prosperity in the region. We share the opinion of the Secretary-General that the status quo is not sustainable. We hope for results in the new negotiations. As stated by the presidency of the European Union (EU), the EU will live up to its particular responsibility and participate actively in the collective effort to bring the parties closer together. The goal is to obtain a comprehensive political solution that will lead to a democratic and multi-ethnic Kosovo.

We also believe that the United Nations continues to be an international focal point for our common efforts in the fight against terrorism. Last year's adoption by the General Assembly of the United Nations Global Counter-Terrorism Strategy was of crucial importance. It underlined the firm commitment of the international community to stand united against those who wish to threaten international peace and security. The next step should be to finalize the negotiations on a draft comprehensive convention on international terrorism. That would send another strong political signal of our unity. Adoption of the convention would be a worthy achievement of the sixty-second session of the General Assembly.

Finally, let me say a few words on United Nations reform and the institutional challenge for the Organization. The starting point is clear: to ensure the necessary reforms of the United Nations, there is no substitute for strong political will on the part of individual Member States.

Reforms of United Nations operational activities are taking shape. However, much work remains to be done if the recommendations of the High-level Panel are to be followed and if the United Nations is truly to deliver as one. It is of paramount importance to make the United Nations more focused and effective at the country level. Experiences from the pilot countries are encouraging and should inspire further action.

The Organization's governance structures also require further reform. The General Assembly should keep its focus on decision-making regarding important

matters and leave detailed management to managers. The Security Council would benefit from reform that makes it more representative. Denmark is therefore encouraged by the new momentum in discussions on Security Council reform.

But, first and foremost, strengthening the United Nations requires an understanding that the United Nations cannot do everything for everyone at the same time. We need to agree on a common vision and on priorities for the Organization. We need to take a step back from the day-to-day agenda and focus on the role that a strong United Nations could play in the future — which points towards strengthening the United Nations in relation to three of its unique features.

The first feature is conflict resolution and prevention as undertaken by the Security Council, the General Assembly and the good offices of the Secretary-General, as well as through United Nations peacekeeping efforts.

The second feature is strengthening of the capacity of the United Nations system to assist countries in the early phases of recovery following conflicts, or countries with very weak institutions. Here, the United Nations has a key role to play. We should help to build stronger bridges from peacekeeping and humanitarian assistance to peacebuilding, reconstruction and development. We should help to build up States and to ensure that weak States do not fall back into conflict or chaos. The Peacebuilding Commission will be essential in this regard.

Thirdly and finally, in the area of international norm-setting, where the United Nations has already shaped the international agenda for action, one of the goals should be to enhance the role played by the Organization in ensuring respect for human rights. As Members of the United Nations, we have taken on the shared responsibility of protecting those in the most vulnerable situations, not least children.

What is needed now is to follow through and to catalyse action. That is no small task, even for a strong United Nations.

The President: I now call on His Excellency Mr. Robert Hill, chairman of the delegation of Australia.

Mr. Hill (Australia): I join my colleagues in congratulating you, Sir, on your election as President of the General Assembly at its sixty-second session. I would also like to wish His Excellency Mr. Ban Ki-moon well for this, his first full session of the General Assembly as Secretary-General.

On behalf of the Australian Government, let me begin by reaffirming Australia's long-standing call for reform of the United Nations. Australia strongly supports efforts to make the Organization more effective. And Australia would like to acknowledge Secretary-General Ban's push for reform so far.

But reform of the United Nations is not an end in itself. We must reform the United Nations so that it can act decisively to meet global challenges. Simply talking about issues does not solve problems.

Over the past 60 years, when the United Nations has acted it has proved its worth. United Nations peacekeeping operations around the world have saved lives and helped communities rebuild. Australia has a proud history of supporting them. Australia was the first country on the ground in what was arguably the first-ever United Nations peacekeeping operation, the 1947 Consular Commission to Indonesia. In the past 60 years, Australia has made contributions to 39 United Nations peacekeeping operations, and we continue that tradition today.

The United Nations, as the only Organization with a truly global membership, has both a unique opportunity to meet challenges and a responsibility to take action. By coming together, we can achieve more than each of our countries could on its own. The United Nations has great moral authority. But, if it fails to act decisively, that authority will be squandered.

As Members of the United Nations, we have set ourselves important goals over the past 62 years: maintaining global peace and security, supporting economic and social development and advancing human rights. In 2005, we pledged to protect those people who are most vulnerable: those facing genocide, war crimes and crimes against humanity. We recognized the responsibility to protect as a central tenet of our shared humanity.

This responsibility to protect underpins the notion that States must protect their own populations. But, if they should fail to do so, the international community has a responsibility to act, not to stand idly by in the face of atrocities, genocide or ethnic cleansing. For the international community, that means we must commit to prevent — and respond to — these most serious of

crimes, wherever they occur. After the immediate crisis has passed, we must support recovery efforts to help communities rebuild and reconcile, by addressing the causes of the crisis.

Last year, the Security Council drew upon the responsibility to protect for the first time in a country-specific resolution: resolution 1706 (2006), on Darfur. And, under a subsequent resolution, an African Union-United Nations hybrid peacekeeping operation was established, with a robust mandate to protect civilians and humanitarian workers. The international community must now ensure that the deployment of the Hybrid force proceeds quickly. Active cooperation is needed across the international community if we are to keep our promise to the people of Darfur. The alternative — to fail — is unthinkable. This is a test for the United Nations and its Member States.

But resolving the tragedy in Darfur is, first and foremost, a test for the Government of Sudan and other parties to the conflict. Ongoing military operations by the Government of Sudan, and last weekend's killing and abduction of African Union peacekeepers by rebel forces, demonstrate the urgent need for the parties to stop these crimes and build peace. Those who have committed crimes in Darfur must be punished.

Australia calls on the Government of Sudan to act on the warrants issued by the International Criminal Court. We call on Sudan to arrest those accused and to hand them over to the Court.

Darfur is not the only humanitarian crisis we have experienced or will face in the United Nations. Tragically, other populations will also require protection from crimes against humanity. The responsibility to protect provides the necessary guide to action. But it is up to Security Council members, on behalf of the international community, to act, and for all United Nations members to then support them.

The events of the past week in Burma remind us of the irrepressible human impulse to seek democratic freedoms and human rights. The United Nations and individual countries must let the courageous protestors in Burma know that their message is understood — a message on the need to move towards genuine democratic progress and national reconciliation, and away from military domination.

Australia has joined the international community in condemning the violent suppression of peaceful demonstrations by monks and civilians. We call for the immediate release of those arrested for exercising their fundamental human rights to peaceful protest and for humane treatment of all those detained. Australia is also introducing targeted financial measures against members of the Burmese regime and its supporters to increase pressure on them to engage in genuine political reform and national reconciliation.

Australia supports the consistent efforts that the United Nations has made to monitor and improve the situation in Burma. We welcomed the statement by the United Nations Security Council following its special consultations on 26 September. We welcome the current visit to Burma by the United Nations Secretary-General's Special Envoy, Mr. Ibrahim Gambari, and his access to Daw Aung San Suu Kyi. We urge the Burmese authorities to work constructively and meaningfully with him in support of his United Nations-mandated mission. Mr. Gambari is well placed to assist in achieving a peaceful resolution to the current crisis.

The responsibility to protect means that we, the international community, must act when confronted with the most serious of crimes. But we also have to act to confront a range of global challenges, from terrorism and climate change to poverty. Terrorists stand in stark contrast to those of us who seek to protect the vulnerable. Their goals are global and their reach transnational. No single country can solve the problem alone. There have been some successes in combating terrorist networks, but we need to develop even more effective strategies to disrupt and dismantle their networks.

Australia calls on Member States of the United Nations to implement fully all relevant Security Council resolutions on freezing the assets of terrorists. Terrorist organizations must be starved of their funds and support. Australia also calls on Member States to conclude a comprehensive convention against terrorism as soon as possible. A convention would provide a solid foundation for international cooperation to prevent, prosecute and punish terrorist acts.

The international community must support the efforts of States that fight terrorism — in particular, fledgling democratic States. We must help those States to establish strong democratic institutions and

accountable Government structures, as State weakness can only allow terrorism to fester.

We should cooperate also to prevent man-portable air-defence systems from falling into the hands of terrorist groups. We should also intensify work on the Global Initiative to Combat Nuclear Terrorism. Australia urges Member States to join the Initiative.

We must also act to stop the spread of weapons of mass destruction. Australia welcomes the robust action taken by the Security Council over the past year in imposing sanctions against programmes relating to proliferation in the Democratic People's Republic of Korea and also in Iran. The Security Council's action on the Democratic People's Republic of Korea nuclear issue sent a strong signal to that country that the international community would not tolerate its nuclear programmes. We welcome recent progress in the Six-Party Talks. We call on the Democratic People's Republic of Korea to maintain the momentum and implement fully its commitment to denuclearize.

The Security Council also sent a strong message to Iran. We welcome Iran's stated intention to work with the International Atomic Energy Agency (IAEA) to address long-outstanding issues. But the international community, including Australia, remains deeply concerned about Iran's nuclear programme. Iran should suspend its uranium enrichment programme, as required by the Security Council, and cooperate fully with the IAEA.

Australia also hopes that the United Nations can continue its work in protecting populations by raising barriers against the illicit trade in conventional weapons. We support the development of an arms trade treaty.

Climate change is another challenge that clearly requires our urgent attention. Climate change demands an effective and enduring global response. The United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change is the forum to forge such a global response. On 9 September, the leaders of the 21-member Asia-Pacific Economic Cooperation (APEC) economies issued the historic Sydney Declaration on Climate Change, Energy Security and Clean Development. The APEC leaders agreed to work to achieve a common understanding on long-term aspirational goals to reduce emissions and pave the way for an effective post-2012 international arrangement.

Significantly, the APEC leaders, whose economies represent over half of the world's gross domestic product (GDP), agreed that the post-2012 agreement needs to be comprehensive and that all economies should contribute to meeting shared global goals. They also agreed that our responses must be equitable and environmentally and economically effective, as well as capable of including diverse approaches.

The High-Level Event on Climate Change, hosted by the Secretary-General on 24 September, and the Major Economies Meeting on Energy, Security and Climate Change, hosted by United States Secretary Rice a few days later, highlighted these same goals and built additional international momentum for a post-2012 agreement. Australia calls on parties to this year's United Nations conference on climate change in Bali to agree to a new mandate for the Convention that will move beyond Kyoto and forge a comprehensive new agreement.

The international community must also address pressing health and human security issues, in particular the spread of HIV/AIDS. Failure to combat HIV/AIDS will have global economic and social consequences. Australia takes its responsibility to act seriously and continues to support its near neighbours in the Asia Pacific region to address the challenge of HIV/AIDS.

The Australian Government believes that the challenge of ending endemic poverty remains the single most difficult economic and social issue, and yet the most fundamental one. In a world where international commerce moves at the click of a button, people should not be starving. Commerce and economic development have the power to lift people out of poverty. Free and open trade helps countries to develop through integration into the world trading system. We must conclude the Doha Round and deliver results that increase market access and reduce domestic subsidies.

Development assistance, too, plays a key role in alleviating poverty. At the United Nations Summit in 2005, Australia undertook to double its development assistance budget by the year 2010, and we are well on the way to achieving that goal, but this aid must be focused and delivered in a way that promotes broad-based economic growth and encourages good governance. We need to make long-term commitments,

particularly in post-conflict development and reconstruction.

I have outlined today serious global challenges facing the international community — humanitarian and political crises, including in Darfur and Burma, climate change, poverty, weapons of mass destruction and terrorism. The Security Council has drawn upon the responsibility to protect principle, endorsed by leaders at the 2005 Summit. It is clear that the international community as a whole has a responsibility to protect those facing genocide, war crimes and crimes against humanity.

Our task is to respond quickly and effectively. The United Nations has been vested with great authority by its Members to effect real change. But that authority will mean little unless we turn commitment into action.

The President: Several representatives have asked to speak in exercise of the right of reply. May I remind members that, in accordance with General Assembly decision 34/401, statements in exercise of the right of reply are limited to 10 minutes for the first intervention and to five minutes for the second intervention and should be made by delegations from their seats.

Mr. Shinyo (Japan): My delegation would like to exercise its right of reply in response to the statement made by the representative of the Democratic People's Republic of Korea this morning. The statement by the representative of the Democratic People's Republic of Korea concerning Japan is entirely groundless and we cannot accept it. First, the claim by the Democratic People's Republic of Korea that Japan is turning its self-defence force into a regular army, with a mandate of pre-emptive strikes on other countries, by changing the peace constitution into a war constitution is totally false.

In accordance with its constitution, for the 60 years since the end of the Second World War Japan has adhered consistently and exclusively to a defensive security policy based on the principle that it should never become a military Power. Japan does not possess nuclear weapons, nor does it export weapons of any kind and it has been actively involved in the field of arms control, disarmament and non-proliferation. I wish to draw the attention of all Member States to the fact that the Democratic People's Republic of Korea conducted a nuclear test on 9 October 2006. That test was in addition to the ballistic missile launches by the Democratic People's Republic of Korea in July 2006.

That act — which was a grave threat to the peace and security not only of Japan but also of East Asia and the international community — is totally unacceptable. We also have to recall that on 14 October 2006, the Security Council adopted unanimously resolution 1718 (2006) sending out a resolute message from the international community condemning the act and indicating measures to be taken by the Democratic People's Republic of Korea and the other Member States of the United Nations.

With regard to the measures against the General Association of Korean Residents in Japan, as mentioned by the representative of the Democratic People's Republic of Korea this morning, the measures being taken by the Government of Japan are in accordance with its national laws and do not violate international law in any way. The allegation of the Democratic People's Republic of Korea is therefore totally groundless.

Let me explain in detail. On 25 April 2007, the Japanese police conducted a search on a subsidiary organization of the General Association of Korean Residents in Japan, located in the Korean Press Hall, in order to collect evidence related to the suspected abduction case. Before the search was conducted, the Japanese police obtained a search warrant from the appropriate court. The Japanese police searched the building legally and properly. They took no illegal action of any kind and engaged in no violence or threats. As for the measures with respect to the headquarters of the General Association of Korean Residents in Japan and the land it occupies, they were necessary in order to collect a debt that the General Association owed. They were taken by a Japanese public organization called the Resolution and Collection Corporation (RCC) to collect a debt owed by the General Association of Korean Residents in Japan. The RCC's collection activities with regard to the non-performing loans of the bankrupt Democratic People's Republic of Korea-affiliated credit institutions, or credit unions, did not differ in any way from measures taken with respect to other bankrupt financial institutions in Japan. The measures were taken purely for the purpose of collecting debt and not for any political or diplomatic purpose.

The Government of Japan has long been taking measures to ensure that Korean residents in Japan lead normal lives, including granting them the appropriate legal status to remain in Japan and improving conditions that affect how they live. The constitution of Japan guarantees equality before the law without discrimination of any kind. On the basis of that principle, Japan has striven to achieve a society free from all forms of discrimination.

Finally, the fundamental policy of Japan with regard to the Democratic People's Republic of Korea is based on the Pyongyang Declaration of 17 September 2002 and remains unchanged. Japan will continue to make every effort to normalize relations through the settlement of differences relating to the unfortunate past and the comprehensive resolution of outstanding problems such as those relating to nuclear issues, the abductions and missile issues.

Japan would like to consult with the Democratic People's Republic of Korea on concrete steps that might be taken for normalization based on the outcome of the recent meeting of the working group on the normalization of relations between Japan and the Democratic People's Republic of Korea.

Mr. Hill (Australia): I am exercising a right of reply in relation to assertions by Mr. Oti, Minister for Foreign Affairs of the Solomon Islands, in his statement to the General Assembly last evening (see A/62/PV.13), that the Australia-led Regional Assistance Mission to the Solomon Islands (RAMSI) has occupied Solomon Islands and is in contravention of the United Nations Charter.

Those assertions are completely unfounded. RAMSI is a Pacific Islands Forum-endorsed mission. It was deployed at the request of the Solomon Islands Government in response to a seriously deteriorating law-and-order situation in the Solomon Islands. RAMSI was also supported by the United Nations Security Council and the Commonwealth. RAMSI's presence and work in Solomon Islands is underpinned by an international treaty between Solomon Islands, Australia and all the other members of the Pacific Islands Forum which are active participants in RAMSI. Facilitating legislation was unanimously passed by the Solomon Islands Parliament.

As the country entrusted under the RAMSI treaty with lead responsibility for RAMSI, Australia remains vigilant of the importance of respecting the sovereignty of Solomon Islands. RAMSI clearly does not seek to substitute for the Solomon Islands Government. Rather, RAMSI has created an enabling environment so that the Solomon Islands Government can once again deliver essential services to its people. All RAMSI programmes are agreed with the Solomon Islands Government. RAMSI has worked in partnership with the Solomon Islands Government to rebuild the institutions of State to enable them to enforce the country's own laws and regulations. In doing so, RAMSI has assisted Solomon Islands to reassert its sovereignty.

There are a variety of mechanisms in place that ensure RAMSI's accountability to the Solomon Islands Government and contributing countries, including a treaty obligation for the Australian and Solomon Islands Prime Ministers to jointly report to Pacific Island Forum leaders meetings on RAMSI each year, monthly reports to the members of the Pacific Island Forum, annual reporting by RAMSI on its performance, a medium-term strategy that maps out an agreed path by the Solomon Islands Government and RAMSI towards the completion of RAMSI's mandate and a wide-ranging review of RAMSI by the Pacific Island Forum at the specific request of the Solomon Islands Government.

RAMSI has now been in the Solomon Islands for four years and in that short time has made remarkable progress that has seen fundamental improvements to people's daily lives. Law and order was quickly restored, enabling people to lead normal lives, free of fear and intimidation. Revenue has grown in the order of over 500 per cent. Foreign investors are returning. The Solomon Islands Government is producing balanced budgets, and government services, such as schools and health clinics, have been restored.

Given these significant achievements, it is not surprising that RAMSI continues to enjoy widespread community support in the Solomon Islands. A recent survey demonstrated that over 90 per cent of Solomon Islanders continue to support the presence of RAMSI in their country.

Mr. Bhattarai (Nepal): My delegation would like to exercise the right of reply in response to the remarks made by the leader of the Bhutanese delegation this afternoon on the issue of Bhutanese refugees sheltered in Nepal on humanitarian grounds for the past 16 years.

The presence of Bhutanese refugees in camps in Nepal and their plight has roots in the discriminatory policy of that Government towards its citizens. His remarks are misplaced and, therefore, unfounded. They ignore the suffering of the refugees in camps.

Nepal considers this problem as one between the refugees and the Government of Bhutan. Our position is that these refugees must be allowed to return to their homeland in full dignity and honour, without any conditions, and they must be allowed to be a part of their national life.

To conclude, I would like to reiterate the position that the leader of my delegation took yesterday.

Mr. Pak Tok Hun (Democratic People's Republic of Korea): I would like to exercise the right of reply to the statement or comment by the delegation of Japan.

The Democratic People's Republic of Korea cannot remain unconcerned at the recent moves by Japan to militarize by turning various forces into a regular army. We are concerned about these Japanese moves, particularly because Japan is close to our country and it invaded the Asian countries and committed the massacre of millions of innocent people. Japan has furthermore been distorting its aggressive history instead of repudiating it.

Japan's non-admission of its crimes against humanity is little short of an open declaration that it would again launch military aggression overseas.

It is against this background that the Democratic People's Republic of Korea built a strong defensive deterrent in order to ensure that Japan would not dare to launch aggression against the Democratic People's Republic of Korea anymore. My delegation would like to remind the Japanese delegate that renouncing its militaristic past is best for Japan itself and that the international community will not allow Japan to play a political and military role equivalent to its economic power.

As for the second issue that the delegate of Japan mentioned, we are very much concerned about the suppression of Koreans and their organizations in Japan by Japanese authorities. This has become an intolerable situation. From the outset of this year, Japanese authorities set in motion vicious media attacks with various kinds of false reports aimed at tarnishing the image of Korean organizations in Japan in a frantic bid to incite bitterness towards my country, the Democratic People's Republic of Korea, and Korean organizations in Japan.

At the same time, the director of the Japanese National Police Agency has organized a wholesale repressive campaign by his policemen to prosecute and arrest officials of *Chongryon*, Korean organizations and Koreans in Japan, and to carry out other actions, although the police have an obligation to protect the rights and activities of all citizens. They claim that it is the task of the police to put pressure on North Korea and to force North Korea to enter into negotiations with Japan.

The Japanese police authorities have conducted a forced search of numerous Korean organizations and related facilities, including the headquarters of the *Chongryon* and Korean schools, blundering and arresting Koreans with the support of heavily armed police units and armed vehicles.

The Japanese authorities went even further to force Chongryon to sell land and buildings and its entire headquarters in a vicious attempt to exterminate that Korean organization at any cost.

This move seeks to physically annihilate the centre of the activities of Korean organizations that defends the democratic national rights of Koreans in Japan and to stamp out the activities of the Korean organizations and the Koreans in Japan. That Korean organization, called *Chongryon*, is alleged to be an overseas compatriots organization of the Democratic People's Republic of Korea. Its mission is to protect the democratic national rights of the direct victims of the drafting of Koreans by Japan in the past and the Koreans in Japan and their descendants.

The Japanese authorities describe their criminal action taken against Koreans and their organizations as carrying out the law or simply a financial issue relating to the collection of bonds. However, this is a political plot and represents criminal moves to deprive Chongryon, the Korean organization, of the centre of its activities and destroy it at any cost. But they deny this clear fact.

I would also like to reply to the statement made by the representative of Australia a few minutes ago. The nuclear issue on the Korean peninsula, as made clear time and again, including from this very podium, is no more than a product of deep-rooted, hostile

policies towards the Democratic People's Republic of Korea. No issue will be solved by resorting to sanctions and pressure and hostile policies, as proven by history.

Our national military power is defensive and its nature rests solely on the need to safeguard our sovereignty. It also serves the interests of the countries in the region to promote peace, security and stability.

We urge Australia to look squarely at the nature and origin of the nuclear issue on the Korean peninsula and to act in a way that is conducive to the solution of this issue.

Mr. Shinyo (Japan): It was not our intention to take the floor again, but we feel that we are obliged to reply to the statement that was just made by the delegate of the Democratic People's Republic of Korea.

Japan has been facing up to its past with sincerity and consistency. We feel remorse and have offered apologies so many times since the end of the Second World War. With that in mind, since that time Japan has been consistently dedicating itself to promoting international peace and prosperity as well as demonstrating its respect for democracy and human rights. That is a very well-known fact to all the Members of the United Nations.

So what was said by the representative of the Democratic People's Republic of Korea is not acceptable. As I have already stated in my previous statement, the Japanese policy towards defence and towards security in our region is solely of a defensive nature. We have already clearly stated that Japan's policy is confined only to defending my country and that we have no policy whatsoever of exporting arms to foreign countries. We do not possess any nuclear weapons — which is different from some of the neighbouring countries — and we have no policies that pose a threat to foreign countries. None of that is the case.

Regarding the allegation that has been made by the representative of the Democratic People's Republic of Korea with regard to the General Association of Korean Residents in Japan, I stated in my previous statement that nothing here could be regarded as a violation of international law, and nothing should be regarded as imposing measures hindering the residency of Koreans living in Japan. We are totally against that kind of thing.

I do not have to repeat once again because we have already described the police action taken by the Japanese police authorities vis-à-vis the General Association of Korean Residents in Japan and also the measures taken by the Resolution and Collection Corporation (RCC), which is a public organization, against the General Association of Korean Residents. This was an issue of debt on the part of that organization. And the first one was closely related to the abduction case — and that is very serious. That is a serious crime in Japan.

Thus, the allegation that has been made by the Democratic People's Republic of Korea is quite unacceptable. We would like to repeat that the policy that has been applied and other facts clearly show that there is no weight to this allegation.

Mr. Pak Tok Hun (Democratic People's Republic of Korea): I am very sorry to take the floor again. I will be very brief concerning the remarks made by the Japanese representative. Japan always says that it apologizes for the crimes committed in the past, in particular against Koreans. But this is only lip-service. We very often see that they revoke their apologies. Their apologies should be followed by action.

For example, numerous high-level officials of the Japanese Government and of the parliament, even say that there were no comfort women for the Japanese army. They distort the facts. They even humiliate those comfort women as prostitutes. They call it the "war against Asian countries", "the war for liberation". We do not see any sincere apology on the part of Japan.

On the second issue, that of the Association of Korean Residents in Japan, he said there was no violation. He said that this was an issue of debt. If this issue is an issue of debt, as the Japanese representative said, then why did Japan mobilize a huge force of armed forces — hundreds of policemen, and police forces with armed vehicles — to suppress those who opposed the search by Japanese policemen?

And as for the abduction issue, I have already made our position clear on 28 September, in my reply to Japan (see A/62/PV.11). In a nutshell, we officially regret that the 13 Japanese were abducted, and we sent all those who remained alive to Japan, together with their children. I wonder if the Japanese representative

has ever thought about the crimes Japan committed against Koreans: 8.4 million were forcibly drafted and abducted. But they have never, in this international forum, apologized for — or admitted — that.

We urge Japan to undertake a policy of closer cooperation, clearly look at the situation now and act with prudence.

The meeting rose at 8 p.m.

United Nations A/62/PV.16

General Assembly

Sixty-second session

Official Records

16th plenary meeting
Wednesday, 3 October 2007, 10 a.m.
New York

President: Mr. Kerim ..... (The former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia)

The meeting was called to order at 10.10 a.m.

Agenda item 8 (*continued*)

General debate

The President: I give the floor to Mr. Volodymyr Khandogiy, First Deputy Minister for Foreign Affairs of Ukraine.

Mr. Khandogiy (Ukraine): Allow me, first of all, to congratulate you, Mr. President, on your election to the high post of President of the General Assembly at its sixty-second session. On behalf of my delegation, let me wish you, sir, every success in your important mission and assure you of our full support.

I would like to extend warm words of appreciation to your predecessor, Mrs. Haya Rashed Al-Khalifa of the Kingdom of Bahrain, whose extensive diplomatic experience and skilful guidance throughout the sixty-first session greatly contributed to its success.

Allow me also to take this opportunity to express our support for the ambitious plans and consistent efforts of the Secretary-General, Mr. Ban Ki-moon, to re-energize the Organization, strengthen its capacity and update the United Nations system in the new century.

International terrorism remains one of the most serious threats facing humankind today. Last year the General Assembly, by adopting the United Nations Global Counter-Terrorism Strategy, made a concrete contribution to combat terrorism in a coordinated manner at the national, regional and international levels. We believe that the adoption of a definition of terrorism during the current session would be a starting point in assessing counter-terrorism measures taken by each State.

My country joined the anti-terrorist coalition at its inception and has made a significant contribution to its activities. In the last five years, all 13 international counter-terrorism treaties have been ratified by the Ukrainian Parliament.

On the governmental level, we support international anti-terrorist efforts, in particular, through participation in the Global Initiative to Combat Nuclear Terrorism. This fall, we plan to organize in Ukraine the third international forum on measures to counteract acts of nuclear terrorism with the participation of civil society, scholars and non-governmental organizations.

Disarmament and non-proliferation are among the most important challenges on our agenda. As a country that voluntarily renounced its military nuclear arsenals, Ukraine is truly disappointed that a world without weapons of mass destruction (WMDs) remains a distant dream.

The international community continues to be intimidated by the threat of WMD proliferation. The strengthening of international legal norms and political instrument to prevent WMD proliferation remains a top priority. In this regard, I would like to stress the importance of the universalization of the Treaty on the Non-Proliferation of Nuclear Weapons and the Comprehensive Nuclear-Test-Ban Treaty, as well as the

This record contains the text of speeches delivered in English and of the interpretation of speeches delivered in the other languages. Corrections should be submitted to the original languages only. They should be incorporated in a copy of the record and sent under the signature of a member of the delegation concerned to the Chief of the Verbatim Reporting Service, room C-154A. Corrections will be issued after the end of the session in a consolidated corrigendum.

07-52646 (E)

Biological and Toxin Weapons Convention. Commemorating in 2007 the tenth anniversary of the Chemical Weapons Convention (CWC), Ukraine is ready to contribute to the Organization for the Prohibition of Chemical Weapons (OPCW) efforts on ensuring universal adherence to the CWC, particularly by Middle East countries.

With this in mind, Ukraine proposes to host next year, together with the OPCW, an international conference with the participation of, inter alia, countries from the Middle East and North Africa. The anticipated outcome of such a conference might be a joint statement of the intention of the countries concerned to adhere to the CWC.

We are convinced that the only way forward is to make simultaneous progress in the areas of both non-proliferation and disarmament.

We cannot but underscore our concerns over the recent tendencies that have already caused the erosion of the multilateral regime in the arms control and disarmament spheres with a negative impact on mutual trust and confidence among States. The very recent events around the Treaty on Conventional Armed Forces in Europe have seriously put into question the future of this important arms control instrument, widely recognized as the cornerstone of European security.

Speaking about global peace and security, I cannot but draw attention to the problem of the protracted conflicts in the GUAM Group area. These conflicts create instability and insecurity and constitute a threat to peace in the region. There is no doubt that these conflicts endanger the sovereignty and territorial integrity of the countries of the region, while also hampering their economic and social development.

We are concerned that numerous international efforts to settle those conflicts have yielded no results. It is crucially important that the world community continue taking practical steps to that end. In our opinion, the United Nations, regional organizations and other relevant mechanisms should harmoniously complement one another, using their comparative advantages in peacemaking efforts.

In this context, I would like to stress Ukraine's unequivocal support for a lasting settlement in Kosovo. That objective cannot be achieved by undertaking unilateral steps nor by steps seeking to bypass the United Nations. A hasty settlement can only destabilize the situation in the region and have negative implications for the entire system of international relations, since similar scenarios could be pursued by separatist entities in other regions.

Ukraine has always supported United Nations peacekeeping efforts, both politically and practically. We are glad to note that the recent noticeable increase in peacekeeping activities has taken place in accordance with the reform strategy of Peace Operations 2010. That is especially important in light of the ongoing and expected deployments in the future. In this context, Ukraine supports the Secretary-General in his efforts to strengthen the United Nations capacity to manage and sustain peace operations.

I would also like to draw your attention to the fact that next year will mark the sixtieth anniversary of United Nations peacekeeping operations. In this regard, our delegation proposes to adopt, at the sixty-third session of the General Assembly, a special declaration to commemorate this event.

United Nations credibility will always be measured by its ability to respond adequately to various threats in all regions of the world. No organization is better equipped to deal with those issues. The United Nations should lead multilateral efforts with a view to reaching solutions in the interest of all. But, to address them effectively, we need to take further steps in reforming and improving existing mechanisms of the United Nations in order to make this Organization more relevant in the twenty-first century.

Unfortunately, the process of reforming the Security Council, which is the key element within the process of renewing the United Nations, is still only an agenda item. We are of the view that the reform process can only benefit from new, creative approaches that will eventually bring about tangible results. In this regard, I would like, once again, to stress Ukraine's position that one of the necessary elements of Security Council reform should be the allocation of an additional non-permanent seat to the Group of Eastern European and other States, whose membership has more than doubled since 1991.

In today's world, adherence to sound economic, social and environmental policies and good governance are the key factors in achieving sustainable development. We share the view, expressed in a

number of statements during this session, that sustainable development is a global challenge. Ukraine believes that only through concerted efforts, using universal, multilateral mechanisms as well as regional and subregional forums, will those challenges be adequately addressed.

For Ukraine and other countries of the region, the Organization of the Black Sea Economic Cooperation has become an important element in achieving internationally agreed Millennium Development Goals.

At the same time, the forces of nature, complemented by reckless and irresponsible human behaviour can disrupt development plans, reshape continents and even wipe out whole countries from the world's map. Science has shown, on many occasions, that climate change, global warming and pollution may cause sudden and dramatic consequences if not addressed in timely, proper and effective ways. Ukraine is firmly committed to the international agreements in the area of climate change, including the United Nations Framework Convention to Combat Climate Change and the Kyoto Protocol.

This year, we marked the twenty-first anniversary of the Chernobyl catastrophe, the worst technological disaster ever faced by humankind. Chernobyl severely affected my country and the entire region. We call upon United Nations agencies and individual donors to continue to provide assistance to the affected States and to work together on the implementation of the relevant programmes in a spirit of cooperation.

Ukraine, as a 2007 coordinator of the Chernobyl Agenda, has proposed, together with the Republic of Belarus and the Russian Federation, the adoption at the sixty-second United Nations General Assembly session, of a new resolution on strengthening international cooperation to mitigate the consequences of the Chernobyl disaster. In this regard, we would welcome broad support for that initiative during this General Assembly session.

Ukraine is approaching the seventy-fifth anniversary of one of the most tragic pages in its history — the *Holodomor* — or Great Famine. The artificial famine of 1932-33, perpetrated by the Soviet totalitarian regime for the purpose of annihilating the rural population, the backbone of the Ukrainian nation, took the lives of millions of innocent people. For more than seven decades this horrific crime, which ranks among the worst catastrophes ever experienced by humankind, still awaits adequate international condemnation.

We sincerely hope that the United Nations, as a collective moral authority and effective instrument in safeguarding human rights and fundamental freedoms, will raise its voice and denounce the horrendous disaster that was purposely inflicted on the Ukrainian population in the early 1930s. By doing so, due tribute will be paid to honour the memory of millions of our compatriots who were outrageously deprived of their lives. It is important to remember the past in order to learn from it and to avoid repeating crimes against humankind in the future.

A decision of the General Assembly to establish an international day of remembrance of victims of genocide would be a worthwhile and timely contribution to the attainment of that goal. Likewise, it could facilitate the effective implementation of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights and the Convention on the Prevention and Punishment of the Crime of Genocide, as the world approaches the sixtieth anniversary of those instruments in 2008. We are confident that this event deserves the adoption of a special resolution.

In the context of human rights, Ukraine attaches great importance to the harmonious coexistence of civilizations, dialogue and cooperation among various cultures and peoples. In this regard, we support the Alliance of Civilizations established under the initiative of the Prime Ministers of Spain and Turkey, and we intend to join the Group of Friends of the Alliance in the near future.

The problems before us are daunting. We believe that the United Nations is the only Organization with the worldwide membership, global reach and universal legitimacy needed to address today's global threats and challenges, which no country can resolve on its own.

I take this opportunity to reaffirm Ukraine's readiness to continue making an active contribution to the further strengthening of our Organization.

The President: I now call on Her Excellency Ms. Billie A. Miller, Senior Minister for Foreign Affairs and Foreign Trade of Barbados.

Ms. Miller (Barbados): It is my pleasure to join with the preceding speakers in congratulating you on your election to preside over the sixty-second session of the United Nations General Assembly. The Barbados

delegation extends its appreciation to your predecessor, Her Excellency Ms. Haya Rashed Al-Khalifa, for her leadership of the sixty-first session and also takes the opportunity to offer its formal welcome to Secretary-General Ban Ki-moon.

Since its independence in 1966, Barbados has been actively participating in the formulation of international policy on a number of issues of universal concern and promoting the centrality of the United Nations in the global development debate. We are proud to have made our contribution to the critical negotiating processes on the development agenda. Much work, however, needs to be done.

Permit me to use this occasion to identify those outstanding areas to which Barbados accords outstanding importance and where we consider that urgent results-oriented action must be taken by the international community. I refer specifically to the effective and comprehensive implementation of the global partnership for development as set out in the Millennium Declaration, the Monterrey Consensus, the Johannesburg Plan of Implementation, the Barbados Programme of Action and the Mauritius International Strategy; the provision of stable, predictable and adequate financial resources for the implementation of development commitments; the creation of a more enabling international environment that would facilitate the achievement of the Millennium Development Goals (MDGs) by a majority of developing countries, particularly the most vulnerable among them; the recognition by the international community of the importance of providing continued support for the needs of middle-income developing countries; the implementation of existing global agreements on climate change as well as the early adoption of an ambitious and comprehensive post-Kyoto agreement; the protection and sustainable management of the Caribbean Sea; the successful conclusion of the Doha round of trade negotiations, with development as a central component of its outcome; the promotion of international cooperation on tax matters; the need for United Nations reinforcement of its commitment to assist all Member States in their efforts to combat the problems associated with the trafficking in and trans-shipment of illegal drugs, as well as the consequent increase in violent crime; and, finally, the need for progress on Security Council reform and for sustained emphasis on revitalizing the Economic and Social Council.

The gap between promises and implementation continues to frustrate our achievement of the full range of internationally agreed development goals. The level of international cooperation and resources committed by development partners has been woefully inadequate. Small island developing States, for example, have had, to date, to assume the majority portion of the implementation burden of the Barbados Programme of Action and the Mauritius Strategy, despite the fact that these goals were determined by the consensus of the entire international community. Similarly, the needs of middle-income developing countries were not adequately addressed through the Monterrey Consensus on Financing for Development, and they continue to be deprived of the vital development support they require to complete the transition. Next year's Follow-up International Conference on Financing for Development must seek to redress this situation.

There remain only eight years before we reach our target date of 2015 for the achievement of the MDGs. We must identify effective strategies to transform Member States' political commitment to the MDGs into results-oriented, concrete action. We must forge strategic partnerships, not only within and across national borders that encompass varying levels of development and economic prosperity, but also among the private sector, the public sector and civil society.

It can no longer be denied that climate change is an alarming phenomenon that requires focused attention and urgent and decisive global action by the international community. I warmly commend the Secretary-General Ban Ki-moon for his initiative to convene the high-level event on climate change on 24 September. The presence of so large a number of heads of State and Government at that important session is a clear indication that the grave dimensions of the problem have been recognized and the need for bold political leadership fully understood.

If we continue to delay action, we will be judged harshly, and deservedly so, for callously placing the inheritance of future generations in greater jeopardy. For today, we may have choices; tomorrow, they will not.

Barbados is a small, low-lying island State, highly dependent on its coastal and marine environment for its economic activity. For its people, the stakes could not be higher. Climate change not only

represents the most serious challenge to our sustainable development, it also threatens our very survival. Prime Minister Arthur of Barbados said at the 24 September meeting that there exists no reason — scientific nor political — for delaying an immediate response to this global crisis.

Barbados and other members of the Caribbean Community have taken steps, at the national and regional levels, to develop and implement climate change mitigation and adaptation strategies and plans, largely from our own resources. However, the most effective unilateral adaptation strategies will be futile in the absence of decisive global action to reduce harmful greenhouse gases emissions and to address climate change in a comprehensive manner. Our leaders have underscored the imperative of collective action to address climate change, with the United Nations at the centre of the search for lasting solutions to that problem. In December, our negotiators in Bali must seize this moment in time.

The international community has yet to complete the Doha Round of multilateral trade negotiations, with an outcome that has development at its core. While trade liberalization can assist in that process, much more is required if sustainable economic development is to be achieved in the developing world. We firmly believe in a multilateral process, which will not only cater to the aspirations of the more developed countries, but will also address the needs of developing countries, especially those with small, vulnerable economies such as ours. I urge the international community to proceed with the multilateral trade negotiations with a view to reaching a successful and mutually beneficial outcome.

Barbados and the other countries of the Caribbean Community (CARICOM) are neither major suppliers of nor demand markets for illicit drugs. Yet, because of our geographical position and external factors that are largely beyond our control, we find ourselves affected by the illicit trafficking in drugs, small arms and light weapons and their constant companion, transnational organized crime. As small countries with limited resources and severe vulnerabilities, we depend on international cooperation to counter those threats. The presence of the Caribbean Regional Office of the United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime (UNODC) in Barbados, which served a total of 29 States and territories and provided significant technical assistance, was extremely important to the Caribbean region.

We are deeply concerned about the decision taken unilaterally in Vienna to close that Office, and we are not at all convinced that it will make our region safer from these very real threats. On the contrary, the studies published earlier this year by the UNODC and the World Bank, on drugs, crime and development in Central America and the Caribbean, clearly demonstrate the need for an enhanced international effort in the region. It is our sincere hope that this unfortunate decision will be reversed as a matter of urgency and that the United Nations will once again engage the Caribbean region, through the reopening of the Regional Office in Barbados.

The issue of reform of the Security Council has been under consideration by the General Assembly for several years. Member States have expressed their views, and group positions have been formulated, but firm decisions have eluded us. It is now time for political compromise in the negotiation of an acceptable solution. Barbados will continue to participate actively in this process.

Gender equity and the empowerment of women are critical to development at both the national and international levels. There is a need to improve the way in which gender is treated within the context of the United Nations. It is crucial that the proposal to establish a new gender architecture be further discussed at the intergovernmental level and that all concerns be addressed and taken into consideration before a final decision is made. Any new structure must give due prominence not only to normative and advocacy issues, but also to issues of development, operational activities and adequate resources.

The deepening of the regional integration process is critical to the ability of CARICOM countries to respond to the challenges and opportunities presented by changes in the global community. Having established the Single Market in 2006, our efforts are now focused on mechanisms to bring the Single Economy into effect through a process of phased implementation. The Single Economy will facilitate further integration of our production and financial sectors, the coordination of our economic sectoral policies, the convergence of macroeconomic policies, the building of a regional capital market and the harmonization of monetary and fiscal policies.

Functional cooperation has been a central theme of the Caribbean Community since its inception. We believe that, as small nations with so much in common, our best means of advancement lies in sharing our resources, experience and expertise to address mutual concerns. Health, education and, more recently, security are our foremost areas of resource pooling and research. Our region has the distinction of being one of the first to have eradicated polio and smallpox. A fortnight ago, the region convened its first summit to specifically address chronic non-communicable diseases, which have become the major causes of morbidity and mortality.

A stable, peaceful and prosperous Haiti is essential for the effective functioning of the Caribbean Community to which it belongs. There is a continuing urgent need for substantial support from the international community to assist Haiti in consolidating and strengthening the commendable progress that it has made to date. A prime requirement is the further extension by the Security Council of the mandate of the United Nations Stabilization Mission in Haiti to include a focus on peacebuilding, judicial reform, institutional support for the provision of basic services, and border management. We must directly address the humanitarian and socio-economic needs of Haiti if the majority of the population is to be lifted out of poverty and if the underlying preconditions for threats to peace and security in the country are to be removed.

This year, many countries around the world, including Barbados, commemorated the two-hundredth anniversary of the abolition of the trans-Atlantic slave trade. The horrors of the slave trade — particularly the notorious middle passage — were of such huge scale and intensity that it can truly be considered one of the earliest crimes against humanity. That experience must never be repeated.

To bring closure to the criminal activity that was racial slavery, we also need to bring equity to the emancipation process. Addressing the controversial issue of reparations is essential to the attainment of those objectives. This is not the first time that a discussion on reparations has taken place and that decisions have been made. During the nineteenth century, Europeans accepted and enforced multiple forms of reparations.

Delivering the Wilberforce Lecture in the United Kingdom earlier this year, Prime Minister Arthur proposed the establishment of a William Wilberforce educational fund. Barbados encourages all those countries that participated in and benefited from this iniquitous practice to support that important initiative. In so doing, they will be paying tribute to the courage and the moral convictions of all those who campaigned tirelessly for the end of the slave trade and of slavery, and at the same time they will be supporting the continuous evolutionary experiment in human relations represented by the ethnic pluralism of Caribbean societies.

In international affairs, a multilateral approach is the best means for countries to fully and effectively address the world's most pressing problems. It is our collective responsibility to make sure that this Organization, the epicentre of multilateralism, is reformed and revitalized to make it more accountable — a transparent and effective instrument in the service of the development efforts of all its Members.

Development is the key to sustainable international peace and security. In our quest to guarantee the primacy of development on the global agenda, we must make certain that the United Nations is sufficiently well funded to meet the needs of the poorest and most vulnerable among us, to support the aspirations of middle-income developing countries and to facilitate the transition to developed-country status of those who are poised to make that transition. The disproportionate allocation of regular budget resources away from the development agenda must be reversed without further delay.

There can no longer be a deficit in the world's development performance. We must all demonstrate the political will necessary to ensure that. It is a task from which we are not at liberty to abstain.

The President: I now call on His Excellency Mr. Vartan Oskanian, Minister for Foreign Affairs of the Republic of Armenia.

Mr. Oskanian (Armenia): Each opportunity to speak from this rostrum is a humbling experience, because I know that all the countries of the world listen to one another and try to discern and understand where our common approaches and interests lie. Those of us who represent small countries have a sense that this forum is a place where large nations address the ills of the world and that we smaller ones ought to stick to issues and topics that are specific to us and to our regions, as if addressing overarching, global issues

were pretentious and best left to those with the power to do something about them.

Today marks my tenth year here, and I risk breaking the rule. This year, as financial calamities have compounded political and natural disasters, it has become very clear that, although our common problems and challenges threaten us all equally, they affect us unevenly. The small nations, which have less of everything — diversity, resources, manoeuvrability, means and options — are at greater peril and have greater susceptibility than those with bigger territories, larger populations and greater potential.

At the same time, the issues on the agenda of the General Assembly — such as peace and security, economic growth, sustainable development, human rights, disarmament, drugs, crime and international terrorism — know no borders, and none of us can address them individually if we want to see effective solutions. Finding solutions to these problems is in our common interest, for they are issues that affect all of humanity. And because these problems cannot be solved within our own borders, no one has either the right to abdicate responsibility for the consequences or the luxury of doing so.

When the speculative market drives the price of oil to $80, those who are too small to have significant reserves are the ones who are affected most, and large countries with large appetites for fuel sometimes make deals on energy matters that are not consistent with their policies. So do we, because energy security is not only a matter of global arithmetic; it is also a matter of life and death.

When climate change causes serious changes in the environment, it does not take much for a prolonged drought or an excessive rain to harm our agriculture and damage our economy or for rising sea levels to reach our cities. But we do not have the space or the diversity to cope and adapt.

When it is news that there have been no explosions in Iraq and when daily calamities are commonplace, we in the small countries begin to sense that we are vulnerable and susceptible to the will and the capacity of other members of the international community and, most important, to their tolerance of distant acts of violence and humiliation.

When development is dependent on the absence of bad weather, disease and war, and when the capacity to ward off at least two of those three ills lies in the hands of those who have the ability to bring peace and to heal, we in the small nations feel at risk and helpless.

When disarmament and arms control cease to be instruments for peace and security and instead become a means to reap political dividends, we in the small countries turn to our own means for self-protection. In other words, we become part of the problem, because the solution is not straightforward or visible.

Finally, when "Darfur" becomes shorthand for "helplessness", we in the small nations of the world realize that power has replaced responsibility. The ubiquitous language of human rights cannot and will not compensate for a lack of political will to act. Genocide must be prevented, not commemorated.

Generation after generation, we find new places for appalling human tolerance of inhuman machinations and names for places of slaughter, mass killings and massacres of those who belong to a particular sector, ethnic group, race or religion. For Armenia, it was, for 100 years, the desert of Der el Zor; for the next generation, it was Auschwitz; later, it was the killing fields of Cambodia; and, more recently, it was Rwanda. If each one of those names, together with the word "genocide", evokes ignorance, helplessness and the covering up of war crimes, "Darfur" today is synonymous with expediency, evasion and simple inconvenience. "Darfur" is synonymous with shame.

My appeal to the international community, on behalf of the small countries, is that it address each of these issues on its own merits and for its own sake, not as a piece of the global power puzzle. When tension rises between global Powers, it leads to polarization, and that in turn leads to a decrease in the capacity of small nations to carry out hard-earned policies of complementarity and balance. Our ability to be part of the process diminishes.

Let me state the obvious: we count on the willingness of the great Powers in the international community to set aside their disputes and to try to address these issues collectively. We also expect that they clearly understand that their power and influence do not make them immune from the consequences of the processes and problems that afflict us.

Last month, Armenia celebrated its sixteenth year of independence. During this period, we have weathered sea changes that have swept us up in regional and global processes that affect us in our daily lives. But we can only take pride in what we have accomplished during the same period: an open and diverse economy, high growth and strong financial systems, as well as improved elections, stronger public institutions and a population that is increasingly aware of its rights. All of that gives us the confidence and determination to address other ills facing our society — uneven growth, a high poverty rate, low pay — and to strengthen our human institutions and deepen our experience with democracy.

We have accomplished all of this under difficult circumstances. We still have a conflict to resolve with a neighbour; there are artificial limitations on Armenia's ability to act; and regional cooperation is lacking.

The agenda of the General Assembly this year includes an item on protracted conflicts. Lumping all those conflicts together is an inherently flawed approach. Our own conflict in Nagorny Karabakh does not belong there. The United Nations is not the place to address it, because that issue is being addressed within the Organization for Security and Cooperation in Europe. Additionally, Karabakh is not a frozen conflict. We are negotiating with Azerbaijan and are inching towards a resolution.

Second, during this time, there has been an evolution of the process. We have a balanced, solid document in our hands that addresses not only the core issues but also consequential issues, and the two together add up to a reasonable solution.

Third, at the core of our process lies the right of peoples to self-determination. Indeed, the people of Karabakh do not want anything more than that which is theirs. They want to live in peace and security on their own territory. In other words, they would like to exercise the very right that every single nation in this Hall has exercised at some time in their history.

Speaking of conflict, we also follow very closely the events in Kosovo. We hear the international community loud and clear when it is said that Kosovo will not be a precedent for other conflicts. We are not attempting to make Kosovo a precedent for our conflict, because that contradicts our own principle that all conflicts are different. At the same time, however, we will not accept or understand the reverse logic, which holds that because Kosovo has been given independence, other peoples cannot achieve self-determination. No one should tell us that there is a quota for liberty and freedom.

At the end of the day, the willingness and understanding of small nations and their involvement in global processes cannot be a substitute for what major Powers with greater capacities and political will to act can do. In this age of openness and inclusion, there is no room for the old instruments of coercion and exclusion. Instead, we need new instruments of compromise and consensus so that we can achieve humanity's enduring goal of living in peace and prosperity.

The President: I now call on His Excellency Mr. Seyoum Mesfin, Minister for Foreign Affairs of the Federal Democratic Republic of Ethiopia.

Mr. Mesfin (Ethiopia): Allow me to begin by congratulating you, Mr. President, on your election to the presidency of the General Assembly at its sixty-second session. I would like to assure you of my country's fullest cooperation in the discharge of the responsibilities bestowed upon you. I have no doubt that this Assembly will benefit from both your personal and professional experience. May I take this opportunity to commend your predecessor, Ambassador Haya Rashed Al-Khalifa, for her invaluable contributions and wise leadership during the Assembly's previous session.

I would also like to extend my sincere appreciation to Secretary-General Ban Ki-moon. He is already fully engaged and has made an excellent beginning in the efforts to address global challenges since he took office a year ago. I would therefore, on this occasion, like to underline Ethiopia's firm commitment to cooperate in every way in assisting him in his demanding endeavours.

Just three weeks ago, Ethiopia began its third Millennium. This Assembly has recognized the Ethiopian Millennium as a world event. On 15 June 2007, it adopted resolution 61/270, designating the year from 12 September 2007 to 11 September 2008 as the year of the Ethiopian Millennium. The Assembly of the African Union also declared the Ethiopian Millennium as a part of African heritage and a unique occasion. We thank you all for that honour and for that expression of solidarity.

Those who have witnessed how Ethiopians of all walks of life have received the new Ethiopian Millennium could not have missed the new spirit that has been on display in the country. This is a spirit of renewal and commitment to stand in unity for a better future for the country. The new Millennium was greeted by all Ethiopians with a pledge to do more for national harmony and for durable peace and stability and to prevail against the poverty that has been the hallmark of the country in recent decades.

Two thousand years ago, Ethiopia was the home of one of the great civilizations of the world, at Aksum. A thousand years ago, we could still produce two of the world's greatest heritage sites. One is the city of Harar, the fourth holiest city of Islam, which by happy coincidence also celebrates its own millennium this year. The other is the city of churches built by Lalibela, a saint, priest and emperor in the town that still bears his name today.

But Ethiopia's fortune began to change, commencing in the second half of the last Millennium. Though a survivor of colonialism and a representative of the greatness of Africa's past, Ethiopia also unfortunately came to represent and symbolize the poverty, dearth and destitution of Africa's more recent history.

Despite the formidable challenges we have faced, all of this has begun to change in the last decade. Hopelessness and frustration growing out of a lack of confidence in the future is no longer an image reflecting the reality of Ethiopia. That is perhaps the explanation for the exuberance displayed by all sectors of Ethiopian society in welcoming the new Millennium. A new and strong national consensus is being created in Ethiopia today. It is a consensus around conviction and the resolve to make the opening of our third Millennium a symbol of Ethiopian renaissance.

That overwhelming optimism displayed by all Ethiopians at the opening of the new Millennium rests on a tangible foundation. The political, social and economic realities in Ethiopia have been changing over the past decade. We are making meaningful progress. Indeed, we have no shortage of detractors. These are non-Ethiopians determined to scuttle the progress we are making in all areas. Their attempts include efforts to undermine national unity and to micromanage Ethiopia's internal affairs. We have seen this, including over the past few days.

Despite all this, however, we continue to make progress. For five consecutive years now, our real gross domestic product growth rate has averaged over 10 per cent. Our per capita income growth has averaged nearly 8 per cent for the last seven years.

More tangible perhaps, in terms of the progress we have been making to change the life situation of our people, is the advance we have registered towards achieving the Millennium Development Goals. We are set to attain universal primary health care by 2010. We are well on the way to achieving the goals set for reducing child and maternal mortality well prior to 2015. We have made much progress in combating HIV/AIDS, malaria and other diseases. We have managed to halt and stabilize the spread of HIV/AIDS and reduce the incidence of malaria.

What we have been able to achieve in the area of education has been quite remarkable as well. There is now little doubt that we are on our way to achieving universal primary education by 2015. Primary school enrolment at present is 91.6 per cent. Sixteen years ago, it stood at 19 per cent. We have also begun to ensure that the education available will, in fact, be quality education.

We have also committed ourselves to environmental sustainability in a tangible manner. Our New Ethiopian Millennium celebrations and the preparations leading to them have underlined practical expressions to this commitment. The slogan "Two Trees for 2000" has been enthusiastically taken up throughout the country. Popular enthusiasm has led to the acceleration of the process that began earlier, culminating, after just three or four months, in the opening of the New Millennium and the planting of close to a billion trees. This is a process that will continue throughout the year and beyond.

Nor are we oblivious to the spectre of global warming and the threat of climate change. Africa is exceptionally vulnerable to the effects of climate change: so many of us live on the margins that the smallest difference in climate can mean the difference between sufficient food and famine, survival and death. It is a global challenge that requires a global response.

However, the need for speedy economic development in countries such as Ethiopia, and in

Africa as a whole, should not be compromised simply in order to reverse dangerous climatic situations for whose creation we have no responsibility. It should, nonetheless, be possible, through effective international collaboration, to ensure that the developmental process in countries such as Ethiopia is environmentally friendly.

In this regard, we welcome the proposal of Brazil for a new United Nations conference on the environment and development to be held in 2012. We are also appreciative of the European Union's (EU) commitment to further cut its greenhouse gas emissions and to introduce more responsible and sustainable energy policies. We endorse the EU's support for reforming the institutional framework of United Nations environmental activities.

The economic and social progress Ethiopia has made over the past decade has, no doubt, been underpinned by the real and concrete advances we have made in building democratic institutions and fostering the rule of law. In this regard as well, we are entering our New Millennium with even greater and renewed commitment to deepening the democratic process in Ethiopia and strengthening a culture of tolerance and mutual understanding among our people. There is a new spirit of tolerance, dialogue and inclusiveness and of commitment to peace among our people.

The further democratization of the country and the nurturing of the rule of law is a pledge that every Ethiopian is making as we enter our New Millennium. This commitment is rooted in the conviction that durable peace in our country and the successful achievement of our objectives in the economic and social spheres can only be viable if we succeed in advancing towards achieving the democratic aspirations of our people. We urge those who wish to meddle in our affairs to remember that they will be held accountable for their action and that they should desist from seeking to place a trojan horse in our society.

It is that same spirit of the New Ethiopian Millennium that must guide our foreign policy. We have, over the last decade and a half, worked in good faith for peace in our region. We are more prepared now than ever and, in the spirit of the New Millennium, to contribute our share to achieving peace and understanding among peoples and countries, most particularly in our own subregion.

We are indeed fully aware that the basis for the renaissance of Ethiopia, to which we are committed in our New Millennium, cannot be limited to what we do in Ethiopia alone. To be true to the new spirit and to succeed in the rejuvenation of Ethiopia, we feel we have the obligation to stretch a hand of friendship to all of those, near and far, who see wisdom in a positive response to this gesture. We are well aware of the need for a regional atmosphere conducive to the rejuvenation of our region and of ourselves. It is not just the absence of conflict and dispute, but the reality of peace and cooperation, which is, we know, an absolute necessity. Without this we cannot achieve our aims, whether in Ethiopia, our region, or in Africa.

Allow me to express our profound appreciation to all those who have helped us make the progress we have made over the past decade. There are those who have been steadfast in their support for our endeavours and who have stood with us through thick and thin. We are indebted to them. Our obligation is to be true to the principles that underpin those expressions of solidarity.

Ethiopia, a founding Member of the United Nations, will continue to be devoted to multilateralism and the fullest cooperation with the United Nations. Therefore, as I conclude, I wish to reiterate, once again, our readiness to cooperate fully, and without reserve, with our Secretary-General in all areas where our contribution is needed and to seek friendship with all nations in the spirit of our New Millennium.

Mr. Abdelaziz (Egypt), Vice-President, took the Chair.

The Acting President: I now call on His Excellency Mr. Lam Akol Ajawin, Minister for Foreign Affairs of the Republic of the Sudan.

Mr. Ajawin (Sudan) (*spoke in Arabic*): It gives me great pleasure at the outset to convey to all those present the greetings and the best wishes of His Excellency Omar Hassan Ahmed Al-Bashir, the President of the Republic of the Sudan, who, owing to unforeseen circumstances, could not take part in this important session.

It also gives me great pleasure to congratulate the President for his election as President of the United Nations General Assembly in its sixty-second session. I am confident that his rich experience and high professionalism will lead our deliberations to the expected successful results. I would also like to seize

this opportunity to pay tribute to his predecessor, Sheika Haya Rashed Al-Khalifa, for the commendable efforts she undertook during the previous session of the Assembly.

I would also like to take this opportunity to warmly congratulate Mr. Ban Ki-moon for his election to lead this Organization. We have no doubt that he will contribute constructively to the revitalization of the United Nations role, preserving its Charter and the service it renders to Member States in a spirit of respect and transparency and that he will enable the United Nations to confront the current challenges at this critical juncture in the development of international relations, where the international community is faced with huge fateful challenges in many areas.

Last year, our President announced to the Assembly from this rostrum (see A/61/PV.11) that peace in our country is no longer a dream, but rather it is a living reality and an irrevocable strategic objective. Today, I am honoured to tell members that since then, we have resolutely continued to implement the Comprehensive Peace Agreement and to make it a reality.

All the constitutional institutions and organs necessary for implementation of the Agreement have been established. At the level of executive institutions, the presidency, the Government of National Unity, the Government of South Sudan and the state governments have all been established. In addition, the legislative institutions at the national level, in South Sudan and at the State level have been formed. At the judicial level, the National Judicial Service Commission and the Constitutional Court have been set up. Furthermore, all commissions provided for in the Comprehensive Peace Agreement — such as the National Constitutional Review Commission, the Assessment and Evaluation Commission, the National Petroleum Commission, the National Civil Service Commission, the Commission to Protect the Rights of Non-Muslims in the Capital and the Technical Ad Hoc Border Committee — have been established and are all now diligently and conscientiously carrying out their mandates.

Under the timeline for the implementation of the Comprehensive Peace Agreement, the National Electoral Commission and the Human Rights Commission will be established by the end of this year. The National Legislature will adopt relevant legislation following the resumption of its session this month. A number of unresolved issues are currently being discussed and negotiated by joint committees comprising representatives of the two partners and other members of the Government of National Unity. We hope that those issues will be resolved soon, particularly since both partners have declared their commitment to that end. Moreover, it is important to emphasize that peace and security prevail today in South Sudan and the other areas covered by the Comprehensive Peace Agreement. That fact in itself is the greatest achievement of the Agreement, since it forms the necessary groundwork for the implementation of other provisions.

While my country reaffirms its full commitment to the letter and the spirit of the Comprehensive Peace Agreement and is determined to energetically and faithfully pursue its implementation, we also expect the international community to honour its pledges in fulfilling the requirements for peace — in particular the pledges made at the 2005 Oslo donor conference, the cancellation of all external debt and the lifting of unilateral economic sanctions and restrictions, which hamper reconstruction and development efforts and, indeed, defeat the very objectives of the Agreement — so that the country can manage the burden of reconstruction and development. Peace and security are two sides of the same coin: neither can exist without the other. Sudanese citizens are eagerly awaiting the peace dividends of reconstruction and development. We must not fail to meet that legitimate expectation.

The march towards peace resolutely continued with the signing of the Darfur Peace Agreement at Abuja in May 2006 under the generous auspices of the African Union, which served as mediator. The Agreement was a huge step forward towards the achievement of peace, stability and development in Darfur through dialogue. That fact was acknowledged by the international community, which effectively contributed to the conclusion of the Agreement.

We have begun to implement various aspects of the Darfur Peace Agreement. In the area of power-sharing and participation, the Transitional Darfur Regional Authority has been established, and citizens of Darfur have been appointed to executive legislative positions at all levels of Government. All provisions of the Agreement related to power- and wealth-sharing and to security arrangements —

particularly the Ceasefire Commission — have also been put in place, in full cooperation with the partners.

With regard to the humanitarian situation, my country has always been fully committed to facilitating unhindered access to the flow of relief assistance for the affected and the needy. We have also facilitated the activities and movement of humanitarian organizations in Darfur. All those efforts culminated in the Joint Communiqué between the Government of the Sudan and the United Nations on Facilitation of Humanitarian Activities in Darfur, which we signed with the United Nations on 28 March 2007. The Communiqué is being implemented through a joint mechanism comprising the Government, the United Nations and national and international voluntary non-governmental organizations.

The humanitarian situation is clearly improving, as confirmed by health and humanitarian statistics showing lower levels of epidemics, hunger and food shortages, a situation better than in other parts of that area of Darfur. The return of internally displaced persons and refugees to their villages is another sign of improvement. The Secretary-General himself witnessed such movement during his most recent visit to the Sudan.

The joint efforts of the Government of the Sudan and the United Nations to maintain and consolidate peace have continued with the strengthening of the African Union Mission in the Sudan (AMIS) through the light and heavy support packages adopted at the high-level meeting held in November 2006 in Addis Ababa, followed by the hybrid operation authorized by the Security Council in its resolution 1769 (2007). Our country has declared its full compliance with the letter and the spirit of that resolution.

The progress that has been made on the political, humanitarian and peacekeeping fronts could have been achieved only through dialogue led by the United Nations and other international actors — for which we had been calling for quite some time — not through the imposition of policies of pressure and coercion. Thus, it has been possible to arrive at an agreement acceptable to all parties. That has propelled the situation in Darfur into a good phase, thanks to efforts aimed at a peaceful settlement and the inclusion of groups that did not endorse the Darfur Peace Agreement.

My country is firmly convinced that the problem of Darfur must be resolved in a political manner, through negotiations. Therefore, we believe that high priority should be accorded to a political negotiation process. We reiterated that belief at the aforementioned high-level consultations held at Addis Ababa. Here, I wish to reaffirm my Government's full support for the joint African Union-United Nations initiative, led by Special Envoys Jan Eliasson and Salim Ahmed Salim. In addition, we reiterate that we are fully prepared to engage in the peace talks scheduled to begin in Libya on 27 October 2007.

From this rostrum, we call on all rebel movements in Darfur to join in the march towards peace without delay and to immediately cease hostilities, in response to the repeated appeals of the Government of the Sudan. My Government has already declared a unilateral ceasefire, which will coincide with the 27 October peace talks. We hope and expect that the armed factions will reciprocate so that a permanent and verifiable ceasefire can be declared when the talks begin. Furthermore, we call on the international community to take firm measures against those who obstruct or refuse to participate in the peace talks. We also call upon those international actors who have hosted a number of the leaders of those factions to demonstrate that they are credible by persuading them to participate in the Libya talks. At the high-level consultations held on 21 September in New York, it was resolved that the talks would be final and conclusive.

Reconstruction and development are major factors for stability and for strengthening efforts towards a political settlement. We must therefore devote similar attention to the issues of development, rehabilitation and reconstruction, as stipulated in Security Council resolution 1769 (2007). We look forward to the international community finalizing its current efforts towards holding an international conference on the reconstruction of Darfur; we hope it will take place soon.

In the twists and turns of the Darfur problem, my country has been the subject of unfair, hostile and ill-intentioned campaigns from some international quarters that are bent on exploiting the crisis in Darfur to serve their well-known interests, agendas and schemes. This vicious campaign has targeted our country's policies and political positions and seeks to exaggerate and distort the facts and to denigrate the

country's capabilities, its heritage and the values and traditions of its people. The campaign also aims at diverting attention from other regional and international crises. We hope that the international community will shoulder its responsibilities in the service of peace and stability in Darfur and seize the golden opportunity that will be provided by the expected peace talks in Libya.

My country, which has reaffirmed its full commitment to the objectives of peace and stability, culminating in concrete terms in the Comprehensive Peace Agreement, will leave no stone unturned to spread peace, security and stability in Darfur. It will strive to consolidate its positive and constructive engagement with the United Nations. Clearly, there is no person or group of persons more concerned, or more determined to stop the bloodshed and achieve peace and stability in Darfur, than the Government of the Sudan.

We live in a world of continuous challenges and recurrent threats. There is no doubt that the international community is more than ever convinced that the only way to confront these challenges and their consequences is through collective efforts effectively and ably led by the United Nations. Such a role is reflected in the special attention the Organization has begun to pay to the challenge of climate change, as reflected in the statements made by heads of State or Government during the recent high-level event on climate change. Climate change and environmental degradation are major causes of conflict in many African countries, including my own, as noted in the recent comprehensive report of the United Nations Environment Programme, which highlighted the serious challenges the world faces as a result of climate change.

We must therefore consolidate our efforts and capacities in order to save our planet for present and future generations. We all recognize that climate change should be confronted within the framework of the requirements of sustainable development and its three pillars: economic development, social development and environmental protection. Sudan signed the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change (UNFCCC) and ratified it in November 1993, thus committing itself to mutual cooperation with the global community to address the problem of climate change. A global consensus on a post-2012 agreement must be reached at the thirteenth session of the Conference of the Parties to the UNFCCC and the third session of the Meeting of the Parties to the Kyoto Protocol, to be held in Bali in December 2007. A successful outcome would be based on the Rio principle of common but differentiated responsibilities and would take fully into account the needs of the developing countries, especially the most vulnerable among them. In this context, the Sudan believes that developed countries must meet their commitments in the fields of development, capacity-building and financial and technical assistance to developing countries and must take the initiative to confront such problems in those countries.

The current international economic conditions and the commercial and financial scenario constrain development in developing countries, especially the least developed among them. This poses imminent dangers to the peoples of those countries, due to many factors. The most important of them are: the paucity of official development assistance (ODA); the unfair terms of international trade, which place restrictions on developing countries' exports to international markets and impose unfair prices on their primary commodities; heavy external debt; and the negative effects of the process of globalization.

The Millennium Summit reaffirmed Africa's special needs and made meeting them a priority. Hence, the United Nations should take the lead in reaching that objective. In this regard, we hope that the position of Special Adviser to the Secretary-General on Africa will be strengthened and that the necessary resources will be allocated to that office to enable it to shoulder its responsibilities towards strengthening United Nations activities focused on Africa, in particular those pertaining to the attainment of the Millennium Development Goals and the consolidation of international cooperation to support the New Partnership for Africa's Development.

The Sudan reiterates the importance of the Millennium Declaration and of reaching its goals, as well as the importance of other items on the international development agenda, with special emphasis on the right of developing countries to determine their priorities without restrictions, conditions or predetermined obligations that impede their development efforts, as described in the African-Caribbean-Pacific Summit that my country hosted last December.

In this respect, I would like to point out that my country has exerted tremendous efforts towards the realization of these objectives and has made noticeable progress in the difficult areas of poverty eradication, education, health care, maternal and child welfare and combating diseases.

The concept of human rights continues to attract the attention of the international community, not only because of the vital importance of the issue, but also because of attempts to deviate from the aim of discussing this issue with integrity and to exploit it in order to settle political scores. My country is of the view that a new approach based on dialogue and cooperation should be introduced when dealing with human rights, instead of naming and shaming, condemnation and threats of sanctions. Moreover, selectivity and double standards should not influence the consideration of human rights issues, especially at the Human Rights Council, which completed its first year with the adoption of an important document that lays the institutional foundation of the Council through, inter alia, ensuring the independence of rapporteurs in the fulfilment of their mandates and ensuring that human rights are monitored with neutrality. With the adoption of that important document, the Council has truly started the process of correcting the failures and shameful practices of the former Commission on Human Rights.

In fulfilment of its political commitments, and consistent with the attention it gives to all sectors of society, especially the most vulnerable ones, the Sudan was among the first countries to sign the Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities. Women have been the focus of Government plans and strategies aiming at their advancement and empowerment in all fields, in compliance with the provisions of the Transitional Constitution and the Comprehensive Peace Agreement. These efforts were crowned with the adoption of national strategies and plans pertaining to the advancement and empowerment of women in all fields.

As indicated earlier in relation to the declared objectives of the establishment of the Human Rights Council, in the light of experience with the former Commission on Human Rights, any effort to reform international institutions will be futile without the reform of the United Nations itself; any United Nations reform will be incomplete without the reform of the Security Council.

While we commend the efforts exerted thus far in deliberations pertaining to Security Council reform and the revitalization of the General Assembly, it is important to intensify efforts further in order to accomplish the desired objectives and understandings in this area. The Sudan reiterates its commitment to the African position, as provided for in the Ezulwini consensus and confirmed by subsequent African summit meetings. Africa is the only continent without permanent representation on the Security Council, although African issues constitute more than 70 per cent of the Council's agenda.

The fact that the Palestinian question remains unresolved since the establishment of the United Nations decades ago not only tarnishes the credibility of the Organization but also continues to pose a serious threat to international peace and security. It is imperative to conclude a comprehensive, lasting and just settlement of this conflict, especially in the light of continued violent confrontations between the Palestinian people and the Israeli occupying forces.

The international community should force Israel to comply with international resolutions and fulfil its commitments, including those set out in the Road Map, and enable the Palestinian people to exercise its right to self-determination and to establish its own independent State, with its capital in Al-Quds Al-Sharif. It is also imperative to reach a comprehensive settlement of the Arab-Israeli conflict, based on Israel's withdrawal from all the land it occupied in 1967. In this context, and to ensure sustained security and peace for all the peoples in the region, we wish to confirm the need to make the Middle East, without any exceptions, a nuclear-weapon-free zone.

Developments in Iraq have further aggravated the deteriorating situation in the Middle East. The increasing pace of violence in Iraq and the deterioration of the security situation make it incumbent on all of us to cooperate and help the Iraqi people in their predicament. This can be achieved only through respect for the free will of the Iraqi people, the preservation of Iraq's unity and national sovereignty and setting a time frame for the exit of occupation forces from Iraq.

My country has repeatedly condemned terrorism in all its forms and manifestations. The Sudan supports all relevant regional and international decisions and

resolutions pertaining to terrorism and affirms its cooperation with the international community to implement these decisions. However, in order to eradicate terrorism, it is necessary to address its root causes and implement the integrated strategies that have been adopted.

I wish to conclude by reiterating that, in order for the United Nations to continue playing its role, we all have a collective responsibility, one based on a solid determination to make this Organization a platform for collective international efforts that would effectively and expeditiously address global challenges. We also need to coordinate with regional organizations within the framework of the United Nations Charter.

We look forward, therefore, to working together to strengthen multilateral cooperation for the common good, transcending narrow self-interest. My country, which this year celebrates the fifty-first anniversary of its joining the United Nations, hopes that this session's deliberations will represent a landmark in fulfilling those goals.

The Acting President: I now call on His Excellency Mr. Marco Haisiku, Minister for Foreign Affairs of the Republic of Namibia.

Mr. Haisiku (Namibia): Sir, allow me to congratulate the President on his unanimous election to preside over the General Assembly at its sixty-second session. We are confident that he will discharge the high responsibility of his office with the wisdom, skill and experience for which he is renowned.

I also wish to commend Ambassador Sheikha Haya Rashed Al-Khalifa, who acquitted herself very well in the management of the General Assembly at its sixty-first session.

I equally wish to express our appreciation to the Secretary-General, His Excellency Mr. Ban Ki-moon, for taking up challenging issues facing humanity with courage and determination.

The world needs a stronger United Nations and effective multilateralism that can help humanity to respond in a timely and effective way to global challenges. Namibia regards climate change as one of the urgent challenges facing humanity today. There is an overwhelming body of scientific evidence that points to the urgency and gravity of climate change. Climate change is a global issue with serious implications for economic growth, sustainable development and the achievement of the Millennium Development Goals.

Climate change is a present-day reality that adversely affects the lives of many people. The international community has to live up to its commitment to provide resources to developing countries in order that they may adapt to the effects of climate change. By the same token, compulsory targets must be set for the reduction of greenhouse gas emissions.

Namibia is not happy with the rate at which investments are being made in the development of renewable and clean energy sources. I call upon the private sector to join hands with Governments to develop and apply technologies that can mitigate climate change. Sir, I assure you of Namibia's commitment to act in consort with other Member States to solve this problem through the establishment of concrete and ambitious goals to be implemented over an agreed period. All countries have a responsibility to act according to their common but differentiated responsibilities and respective capabilities.

Namibia would like to see the process for the reform of the United Nations expedited. The importance of a stronger and effective United Nations, capable of delivering its mandate, cannot be overemphasized. This, among other things, would involve the revitalization and reaffirmation of the authority of the General Assembly as the chief deliberative, policymaking and representative organ of the United Nations.

Namibia is pleased with the enhanced role of the Economic and Social Council. I believe that it is well positioned to shape the overall development agenda, to deal effectively with economic and social issues and to mobilize international efforts for the protection of the environment.

We believe that the Security Council should be made more democratic and transparent in its composition and working methods. All Member States, both big and small, should have a meaningful stake in it. Namibia appreciates the efforts of the President of the General Assembly at its sixty-first session to move the reform process forward. The Security Council has great significance for Africa, since a major part of its agenda currently concerns peace and security issues on that continent. In 2006, for example, 42 out of a total

of 87 resolutions adopted by the Security Council dealt with Africa. However, Africa has only three non-permanent seats on the Council.

I wish to reiterate Namibia's strong support for the common African position as contained in the Ezulwini consensus and in the Sirte Declaration. The need for Africa to be equitably represented in the Council, with all the privileges associated with membership, remains a priority for us. The challenge in the immediate future would therefore be to begin a genuine intergovernmental negotiation process, based on the principle of justice and fairness for all.

The achievement of the Millennium Development Goals (MDGs) and other internationally agreed commitments stand central to global economic stability and prosperity. The highest priority should be our collective commitment to sustainable socioeconomic development on a global scale. I therefore wish to express my delegation's appreciation for the Millennium Development Goals Report 2007, which we find very useful as a summary of what has been achieved so far.

Namibia is concerned, however, that the results are slow and uneven. We wish to underline what is stated on page 4 of the report: "that the MDGs will be attained only if concerted additional action is taken immediately and sustained until 2015". All stakeholders need to fulfil, in their entirety, the commitments they made in the Millennium Declaration and their subsequent pronouncements. It is, therefore, important that Governments and institutions in the economically advanced countries offer genuine partnership by providing new and additional resources commensurate with the commitments made in line with the MDGs.

Namibia is classified as a lower middle-income country. It ranks number 126 out of 177 countries on the Human Development Index, as it still bears the legacy of social and economic inequalities inherited from its colonial past. Inequality in the distribution of income and assets in Namibia is among the highest in the world. Nevertheless, Namibia has made progress in the provision of health, education and other critical services for the majority of the population, and we are on course to meet a number of the MDGs.

Indeed, we face severe difficulty in responding to a combination of the devastating HIV/AIDS pandemic, high levels of food insecurity and poverty at the household level. This situation is compounded by declining international aid to Namibia because of its classification as a lower middle-income country. I once again call upon the international community to increase its support to Namibia, including market access and access to financial sources, in the form of targeted official development assistance, concessional loans and investment flows.

Namibia applauds the Joint Communiqué agreed to by the United Nations Security Council and the African Union (AU) Peace and Security Council as a step in the right direction. There is a need for more structured and formalized cooperation between the two bodies on issues of peace and security in Africa. Such cooperation should also include the areas of financing, logistics, technology and training.

The right of peoples to self-determination is a fundamental human right that is enshrined in the Charter of the United Nations. It is sad that, seven years into the twenty-first century, colonialism is still with us, posing a serious challenge to this Organization and humanity at large. My delegation has raised its voice repeatedly in this Assembly by calling for the realization of the inalienable rights of the people of Western Sahara to self-determination. The international community has an obligation to assist the people of Western Sahara in their quest for freedom and independence. Namibia, therefore, calls for the immediate and unconditional implementation of the United Nations Settlement Plan for Western Sahara, and all resolutions of the Security Council and the General Assembly, with the aim of holding a free and fair referendum in Western Sahara.

Similarly, Namibia is deeply concerned about the continuous suffering of the people of Palestine under Israeli occupation. We wish to reaffirm our full and unequivocal support for the inalienable rights of the Palestinian people to self-determination, including their right to return to their land. I reiterate our appeal to the parties to resume the peace process on the basis of international law and all the relevant United Nations resolutions. To this end, the United Nations has a responsibility to assist the process.

My delegation reiterates its call for an unconditional end to the economic, commercial and financial blockade imposed by the United States of America against Cuba. We believe that the blockade is not only against international law, but that it is also

politically unjustifiable and undemocratic. Its extraterritorial nature impedes free trade and economic development. We urge the Government of the United States of America to heed the call of the international community and to implement the resolutions of the General Assembly that call for an end to the blockade.

Let us commit ourselves, once again, during this session of the General Assembly, to address effectively the challenges we face, to save humanity from catastrophe and to make the earth a common place for all, where all will live in peace and security.

The Acting President: I now give the floor to Her Excellency Mrs. Lygia Kraag-Keteldijk, Minister for Foreign Affairs of the Republic of Suriname.

Mrs. Kraag-Keteldijk (Suriname): It is an honour for me to address this gathering today, and on behalf of the Government and people of the Republic of Suriname I extend my congratulations to President Kerim for having been entrusted the task of leading the work of the General Assembly during this sixty-second session. We pledge our full support and cooperation as we collectively continue our work on the many challenges the world is faced with today.

Allow me to salute your predecessor, Mrs. Haya Rashed Al-Khalifa, for guiding the ongoing process of reform of the United Nations and for her dedication and commitment to the strengthening of multilateralism.

To the newly appointed Secretary-General of the Organization, His Excellency Mr. Ban Ki-moon, we pledge our support in furthering the ideals of the Charter towards sustainable development, international peace and security and respect for human rights and fundamental freedoms.

The current international scene predominantly speaks about the devastating effects of climate change, and also the recent findings of the Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change have confirmed the warming of the climate system and have clearly linked it to human activities.

The effects of climate change will be felt in all parts of the world; however, the impact will be worse in small and vulnerable States. Suriname is a low-lying coastal country, and the majority of the population is concentrated in the coastal zone, where most economic activities, including fisheries, agriculture and industries, are located. A sea level rise would therefore be catastrophic for our country.

Taking into consideration the national interest in exploiting natural resources, it is imperative for a country to find a sound balance between economic development and preservation of the environment. Therefore, the Government has declared a substantial part of our land area as a nature-preserve area, including the Central Suriname Nature Reserve, which has been designated as a World Heritage site by the United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization (UNESCO). Since the majority of our land surface is covered by tropical rainforest, Suriname contributes significantly to counterbalancing the effects of global warming.

A global threat, however, justifies global action, and the responsibility to provide an adequate answer lies with all of us. We call on the international community and development partners to increase their efforts and to continue their technical and financial support to developing countries to safeguard the world environment for current and future generations.

The Government of Suriname remains committed to realizing by 2015 the targets set forth in the Millennium Development Goals (MDGs). This commitment is expressed in our policy documents. Not only do we accept the challenge to achieve the MDGs, but also a commitment towards our people to realize sustainable economic and social development in every part of the country, including the remote areas in the interior, which are populated mainly by indigenous peoples and maroons.

The Republic of Suriname places great importance on the promotion and protection of human rights and fundamental freedoms, including those of indigenous peoples. With the historic adoption of the Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples recently, Suriname has joined the international community in giving recognition to the rights of indigenous peoples. I wish to note that in recognition of the status of indigenous peoples as natives, the Republic of Suriname has recently declared 9 August, International Day of the World's Indigenous People, as a national holiday.

Surinamese society, which is multi-ethnic, multilingual, multicultural and multireligious, attaches great importance to tolerance and mutual respect. I therefore commend the High-Level Dialogue on

Interreligious and Intercultural Understanding and Cooperation for Peace, which will start tomorrow.

I would like to recall that the slave trade and slavery were among the worst violations of human rights in human history, particularly given their scale and duration. We call on the international community to continue supporting the initiative of the Caribbean Community to honour the memory of all those who suffered as a result of the slave trade and slavery.

The United Nations is the supreme institution to advance multilateral diplomacy. Suriname will continue to advocate for the strengthening and updating of the multilateral system, in order to adequately address global issues in the areas of the environment, energy, water, peace and security.

Suriname adheres to the rules of international law. In this context the Government of Suriname respects the award of the arbitral tribunal, which was constituted to establish a maritime boundary between Suriname and Guyana, pursuant to Annex VII of the 1982 United Nations Convention on the Law of the Sea. The award, which includes a finding of jurisdiction to consider the parties' maritime delimitation claims, establishes a single maritime boundary between Guyana and Suriname that differs from the boundaries claimed by each of the parties. Suriname is pleased that the rules of international law have brought an end to a longstanding dispute.

In closing, I reiterate my country's commitment to achieving the objectives of the United Nations, upholding the Charter and the rules of international law, and contributing towards a genuine global partnership.

The President returned to the Chair.

The President: I now call on His Excellency Mr. Elmar Mammadyarov, Minister for Foreign Affairs of the Republic of Azerbaijan.

Mr. Mammadyarov (Azerbaijan): I would like to add my voice to those of previous speakers in congratulating you, Sir, on the occasion of your election to the noble post of President of the General Assembly. I am confident that you will carry forward the able legacy left by your predecessor, Mrs. Haya Rashed Al-Khalifa. Our warm tribute also goes to the Secretary-General, Mr. Ban Ki-moon, as he strives to reinvigorate our Organization.

We all have the great belief that in the twenty-first century the United Nations will be a more effective Organization. The continued relevance of this Organization will, to a large extent, depend on our ability to attune it to our concerns and make it responsive to our needs.

The United Nations must continue to serve the interests of all its Members States, regardless of whether they are big or small. Our approach to problems that transcend national boundaries should be based on a global consensus, while maintaining the key role of the United Nations in the cooperative management of these problems. We need to advance further and harmonize diverging views on the reform of the Security Council. The Council should be transformed into a democratic and respectful organ, reflecting its universal character, corresponding to present-day realities, and taking into consideration the need for balanced geographic representation in its membership.

The reform package should strengthen the General Assembly as the policy-making organ of the United Nations. It is only through reinforcement of the Assembly's role and mandate that we can successfully tackle some of the most pressing issues facing humanity, not least the process of globalization.

This year, 2007, marks the fifteenth anniversary of Azerbaijan's membership in the United Nations. I will use this apt occasion both for reflecting on our experience and for looking ahead. The development of our region is inextricably linked to energy security issues. We in Azerbaijan have been working for more than 10 years on our energy security. When we started our energy projects, the development of oil and gas fields and construction of pipelines, we could not imagine that our energy resources would be so crucial in supporting the causes of free competition and free market. But it so happens that we are right on time and ready to provide an important contribution to global energy security.

Our firm dedication to the policy of economic, political and social reform allowed us to improve our economic performance significantly. Last year, we had a 34 per cent growth in gross domestic product (GDP), and more than 35 per cent this year. In four years, the State budget increased more than fourfold. We managed to decrease unemployment and poverty significantly. A 36.8 per cent increase in the

population's income and savings in financial institutions is a direct indication of the improvement in livelihood.

Investments continue to play a catalytic role in the overall development of the country. In 2007, the level of investments from all financial sources has reached a growth of 10.6 per cent. Most important, as compared to previous years, the share of domestic investments currently accounts for a significant increase of 50.8 per cent, and a large part of it goes to the non-oil sector. These are very important steps towards achieving our goal of a diversified economy.

We believe that the sustainability of growth and development in Azerbaijan not only is ensured by the availability of natural resources but also attests to the commitment and capacity of the Government to protect the rights of investors and to implement its commitments under various contracts in the multibillion range.

Transparency and efficiency in oil revenue management constitutes an important part of the Government's efforts to improve public service and accountability. Thus, it gives me great pleasure to inform delegates that the State Oil Fund of Azerbaijan, which leads the implementation of the Extractive Industries Transparency Initiative (EITI) in Azerbaijan, won the prestigious 2007 United Nations Public Service Award in the category of improving transparency, accountability and responsiveness in the public service. We believe that this success shows the efficiency of our Initiative, and we invite United Nations Member States to discuss the achievements made under the EITI. We plan to introduce a draft resolution on this subject during the current session.

Using our geographical location and unique transportation possibilities, we are pioneering projects on bridging Europe and Asia. Countries to the east of the Caspian Sea have expressed a vivid interest in these projects, and the role of Azerbaijan in regional affairs has become more important and has been transformed into a stabilization factor.

By dint of its political and historical background, Azerbaijan became home to various cultures and religions. Building on this rich experience, during its chairmanship of the Organization of the Islamic Conference Ministerial Council, our country provided substantial input to enhancing dialogue and broadening mutual understanding among nations, cultures and religions. We believe that by spreading knowledge about Islam and its values, cultural dialogue between the civilizations will contribute to mutual understanding and trust. In this regard, the framework of the Alliance of Civilizations provides a good opportunity for joint action and partnership.

Azerbaijan currently holds the rotating chairmanship of the GUAM (Georgia, Ukraine, Azerbaijan and Moldova) group. Our priority is to espouse GUAM geopolitical and geo-economic advantages, utilize its role as a natural corridor bridging Europe and Asia and promote the development of civil societies and the economic cooperation of GUAM Member States.

At the same time, GUAM serves as an effective instrument to increase the international community's awareness about risks and challenges that its Member States have been facing. In this regard, I would like refer to agenda item 16 of the current session relating to the protracted conflicts in the territories of Azerbaijan, Georgia and Moldova. These conflicts have almost the same origin, similarly-developed scenario and dangerous outcome. They all started from the manifestation of aggressive separatism, were accompanied by ethnic cleansing against civilians and resulted in the violation of the sovereignty and territorial integrity of these States.

GUAM is firmly convinced that the settlement of these protracted conflicts must be based on territorial integrity within their internationally recognized borders. Together with GUAM colleagues, Azerbaijan will defend this fundamental principle of international law, initiate formal discussions in the General Assembly and mobilize support of the United Nations Member States.

The Armenian-Azerbaijani Nagorny Karabakh conflict remains the most serious challenge to the security of our region. As a result of the conflict, we are still facing the continued occupation by Armenia of a significant part, almost 20 per cent, of the internationally recognized territories of Azerbaijan. We are hosting approximately one million refugees and internally displaced persons, who were notoriously ethnically cleansed and brutally expelled from their homes of origin in Armenia and in the occupied territories of Azerbaijan.

Azerbaijan's position on conflict settlement is fully based on the norms and principles of international

law, plus four relevant resolutions of the United Nations Security Council that provide for the restoration of the sovereignty and territorial integrity of Azerbaijan and the establishment of vast opportunities for the Azerbaijani and Armenian communities of the Nagorny Karabakh region of Azerbaijan.

Negotiations on conflict resolution, which since 1992 have been carried out within the framework of the OSCE Minsk Group, have so far not yielded any results. The more time passes, the more difficult it is for us to observe from our side of the line of contact the attempts of the current Armenian leadership to consolidate the results of the occupation of our territories, their attempts to destroy everything associated with the Azerbaijani legacy in these territories and to carry out illegal activities thereon. The United Nations shall not tolerate such action. From this high podium, I would like to address the Armenian nation in order that they recognize that their policy of breaching peace and stability in the region has very dangerous, counter-productive and disastrous implications for the long-term perspective of development, above all, for Armenia. I am confident that Azerbaijan will restore its sovereignty and territorial integrity. It is only a question of time.

Finally, on this issue, I would like to express our gratitude to Member States for their unequivocal support extended in September 2006 to General Assembly resolution 60/285, entitled "The situation in the occupied territories of Azerbaijan". Although Armenia dissociated itself from the resolution after joining the consensus on it, we still believe that establishing the proper conditions for the environmental operation may become a significant confidence-building measure.

As a member of the Human Rights Council, Azerbaijan attaches great importance to the efficient functioning of the Council. It is our common task and responsibility to ensure that this institution lives up to the expectations vested in it and becomes a truly objective, vigorous and credible universal human rights body. We are looking forward to finalizing the institution-building of the Council so that it becomes fully operational and devotes attention to the issues directly within its mandate.

In the course of the last two years, the United Nations has continued to represent a unique platform for international standard-setting in the field of human rights by adopting two major documents — namely, the International Convention for the Protection of All Persons from Enforced Disappearance and the Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities. Undoubtedly, adoption of those important instruments represents a significant step forward in a long historical process. Already a signatory to the first Convention, Azerbaijan is currently considering signing the latter.

The President: I now call on Her Excellency Ms. Rosemary Banks, chairperson of the delegation of New Zealand.

Ms. Banks (New Zealand): As we meet for the sixty-second session of the General Assembly, we look again to the United Nations as the global forum to address the challenges which affect us all.

Climate change is serious and urgent, as many have said in this Hall. We welcome that it has been the theme of our general debate this year. The science is clear. Climate change is real and will impact on all parts of the world. To meet the global challenge of climate change, there must be widespread and effective international action. It will be important to get all economies onto low carbon pathways over time. Market mechanisms will have a significant role to play. Individual countries will face different challenges. Different national circumstances must be taken into account.

The United Nations climate change conference in Bali in December will be a fresh opportunity to re-energize our efforts in addressing climate change. New Zealand wants to see a Bali road map emerge in December to set us on the course for an effective future response. New Zealand welcomes the momentum that is being generated by other high-level meetings in the lead-up to Bali, including the recent Asia-Pacific Economic Cooperation Leaders' Declaration.

Last week's high-level event deserves special mention. We congratulate the Secretary-General for his efforts in cultivating the political goodwill that will be vital if we are to reach agreement in Bali.

Taking action as an international community also means taking action domestically. In recent weeks, New Zealand has announced a number of domestic measures to address climate change. An emissions trading scheme will be established from 1 January 2008 and will form the cornerstone of our efforts to

reduce greenhouse gas emissions. It will, over time, cover all sectors and all gases.

We have also identified a number of longer-term domestic goals, which will move New Zealand down the path to carbon neutrality. They will provide benefits, including healthier homes, cleaner air and improved public transport. While climate change is certainly a challenge for us all, it is also an opportunity to move towards a more sustainable world.

With regard to the Millennium Development Goals, we recognize that having passed the halfway point to 2015, the international community needs to step up its efforts to achieve them. At the same time, there is scope for the United Nations development system to be strengthened. We welcome the newly established initiatives in the Economic and Social Council — the Annual Ministerial Review and the Development Cooperation Forum — as practical ways to share information about what is working and where we can improve our efforts at country level.

New Zealand is also committed to improving system-wide coherence at the United Nations in the fields of development, humanitarian issues and the environment. We attach particular importance to working for a strengthened, coherent, gender architecture and towards effective gender mainstreaming across all United Nations entities.

New Zealand welcomes the completion of the United Nations Pacific-based development agencies' strategic framework for the Pacific. We are keen to work closely with United Nations agencies in the Pacific to achieve positive outcomes for our partners in the areas of human rights, sexual and reproductive heath, HIV/AIDS, child immunization and women's leadership.

A strong, prosperous and stable Pacific is a key foreign policy priority for New Zealand. We place a high priority on fostering solidarity and cooperation in the Pacific to tackle the challenges the region faces in democracy, security and economic development. Around half of New Zealand's development assistance goes towards the Pacific.

New Zealand provides assistance in the region in Timor-Leste, the Solomon Islands, Tonga and Bougainville in Papua New Guinea, with each situation calling for a different response.

The Timorese people, their leaders and the international community have all made a huge effort over the past year to return Timor-Leste to a more secure and stable path. New Zealand has participated in those efforts through our contributions to the International Security Forces and to the United Nations Integrated Mission in Timor-Leste (UNMIT). Timor-Leste will require a sustained commitment from UNMIT.

The situation in Fiji continues to be of concern to New Zealand. As a neighbour of Fiji with a long-standing and very close relationship, New Zealand worked hard to avert last December's coup, including by convening a meeting to mediate between the then Prime Minister and the military commander. We very much regret that this failed to dissuade the coup makers from their illegal and unconstitutional path.

New Zealand strongly and actively supports the steps that have been taken by the Pacific Islands Forum to encourage an early return to constitutional government in Fiji. We would welcome a firm commitment from the interim administration to work towards elections within the timeframe endorsed by the Forum. Given that commitment, New Zealand would begin to restore a more normal bilateral relationship through which we could cooperate in addressing Fiji's undoubtedly complex problems.

I also want to take this opportunity to address one issue in particular raised in the Solomon Islands statement on Monday (see A/62/PV.13). It was suggested, inter alia, that the presence of the Regional Assistance Mission to the Solomon Islands (RAMSI), was an "occupation", and that RAMSI's operation transgressed Article 52 of the United Nations Charter. New Zealand has always been committed to upholding the purposes and principles of the Charter in every respect. In our view, RAMSI is entirely consistent with those purposes and principles. It is a specific example of Chapter VIII of the Charter in operation. To suggest it is contrary to the Charter is in our view wrong. RAMSI was established in response to a formal request from the Solomon Islands. Its presence in the Solomon Islands is sanctioned by treaty and by the domestic law of the Solomon Islands. That was recently reaffirmed by the Solomon Islands Parliament. Moreover, RAMSI stems from the endorsement by Pacific Islands Forum Foreign Ministers of a programme of action under the Forum Leaders' Biketawa Declaration. That provides a framework for regional responses in times of crisis or

when members request assistance — exactly the situation in this case.

Amid all these challenges, I would like to report on activity being undertaken by Tokelau, the tiny territory 500 kilometres north of Samoa that New Zealand administers. The people of Tokelau, all 1,500 of them on three atolls, have decided that they wish to undertake an act of self-determination to decide whether they wish to change their present status. A vote in February 2006 narrowly missed the threshold set by Tokelau for a change of status. They will again vote on that issue from 20 to 24 October.

As members of the Special Committee on Decolonization know, New Zealand supports Tokelau's right to choose, but has stood back from any wish to determine the direction of any change. That decision is entirely for the people of Tokelau. New Zealand will support their decision.

Advancement of the rule of law at the national and international levels is essential for the realization of sustained economic growth, development and human rights. New Zealand encourages members to provide their full support to the International Criminal Court (ICC) by acceding to the Rome Statute of the ICC. We also call on all United Nations Member States, especially State parties to the Rome Stature, to fully cooperate with the Court in carrying out its current work. Universality and full support are crucial if we are to end the impunity of the perpetrators of the most serious crimes of international concern, such as those carried out in Darfur, where International Criminal Court arrest warrants are outstanding.

Efforts to protect and maintain the international rule of law can only be effective when built on a foundation of international peace and security.

Interfaith and intercultural dialogue can help to counter religious extremism by encouraging understanding and respect among different faith communities and cultures.

In May, New Zealand hosted two significant gatherings aimed at advancing global response to interfaith and intercultural issues in a practical way. We regard the United Nations' Alliance of Civilizations as the key multilateral process among the growing number of international and regional initiatives in this area.

With respect to nuclear proliferation, New Zealand welcomes the strong signals that have been sent to North Korea and Iran by the Security Council.

On a different topic, New Zealand is convinced that the humanitarian harm posed by cluster munitions must be addressed urgently. We believe that negotiation of a treaty to deal with the problems caused by cluster mines is well overdue. We will host a meeting on this initiative in February of next year.

We are pleased, too, to promote a new initiative at the General Assembly this year calling for action to lower the operational status of nuclear weapons. Maintaining nuclear weapons at a high level of readiness increases the likelihood of these weapons being used, with catastrophic consequences.

The humanitarian disaster and conflict in Darfur threaten security in the entire East African region. New Zealand applauds the efforts by Members to establish the new African Union-United Nations Hybrid Operation in Darfur.

New Zealand is deeply concerned at the current political, economic and humanitarian situation in Zimbabwe. We welcome the efforts being made to find acceptable solutions to the problems Zimbabwe faces. We sincerely hope that these efforts continue and that solutions can be found that will benefit all Zimbabweans and will enable free and fair elections to be held.

New Zealand remains profoundly concerned at the situation in Myanmar. Protestors have been killed, shot at, beaten and arrested. This violent treatment is reprehensible. Engaging in peaceful protests is a fundamental human right. New Zealand, therefore, joins others in calling for the immediate release of those detained in recent weeks, along with the many political prisoners, including Aung San Suu Kyi, who have been held without trial for much longer periods.

The Myanmar regime should be held responsible for the personal safety and treatment of all the people it has detained. We call on the authorities there to stop the violence and to encourage a process of genuine dialogue with pro-democracy leaders and ethnic minorities.

New Zealand fully supports United Nations efforts to resolve the immediate and longer term situation in Myanmar. We welcomed the visit to Myanmar of Special Envoy Ibrahim Gambari. We fully

support continued discussion of the situation of Myanmar in the Security Council with a view to considering what further steps might be taken by the international community.

Turning now to human rights, New Zealand will stand for election to the Human Rights Council for 2009 to 2012. We want to do our part to help this fledging United Nations organization achieve its full potential as the pre-eminent global human rights body.

A human rights issue of particular importance to New Zealand is the death penalty. Adoption of a resolution on a global moratorium on this inhumane form of punishment would represent a historic step towards global efforts to abolish the death penalty.

In closing, New Zealand has been a committed and active participant in the United Nations since its formation. Secretary-General Ban Ki-moon has called on Member States to deliver to the best of our abilities at the United Nations, recognizing the need for faster, more effective action, as well as for a more results-driven Organization that strives to have the highest standards of transparency and professional ethics. New Zealand whole-heartedly agrees.

We look forward to working closely with the Secretary-General, with you, Mr. President and with other Member States in all of our efforts to build a stronger United Nations for a better world.

The President: I now call on His Excellency Mr. Sirodjidin Aslov, chairperson of the delegation of the Republic of Tajikistan.

Mr. Aslov (Tajikistan) (*spoke in Russian*): First of all, I would like to join in the sincere congratulations on your election as the President of the General Assembly at its sixty-second session and wish you every success in this lofty office. I would also like to avail myself to this opportunity to express gratitude to your predecessor, Her Excellency Mrs. Haya Rashed Al-Khalifa, for her selfless and efficient work during the sixty-first session. We also join in the words of welcome addressed to the Secretary-General of the United Nations, Mr. Ban Ki-moon.

Tajikistan welcomes the continued reforms of the United Nations structure and enhancement of its activities aimed at strengthening peace and international security, furthering the promotion of human rights, expanding its humanitarian mission, placing the problem of climate change as an issue of top priority and addressing today's other challenges. We believe that further progress in dealing with these issues of global importance is dependent on joint, concerted and consistent actions of the entire international community.

Tajikistan attaches primary importance to the further strengthening of the disarmament process, the non-proliferation of nuclear weapons, the speedy entry into force of the Comprehensive Nuclear-Test-Ban Treaty and activation of negotiations on the establishment of nuclear-weapon-free zones. In cooperation with other Central Asian States, Tajikistan took a very active part in the drafting of the Treaty on a Nuclear-Weapon-Free-Zone in Central Asia, which was signed on 8 September 2006 in Semipalatinsk, and in the adoption of the relevant General Assembly resolution (A/Res/61/88) last year.

It is common knowledge that international terrorism, transnational organized crime and illicit drug trafficking have become a serious obstacle on the road towards sustainable development, inflicting much suffering and causing trouble to humanity. The international community should intensify its efforts aimed at counteracting the commission of acts of terror and the proliferation of ideologies based on terrorism, extremism and separatism, interreligious and inter-ethnic intolerance and hostility, and should enhance its struggle against the financing of terrorism.

The global system of combating terrorism, which is currently taking shape, cannot be established without the involvement of regional and subregional organizations. In our region, the Commonwealth of Independent States, the Collective Security Treaty Organization and the Shanghai Cooperation Organization are serving this purpose.

We believe that long-term success in combating terrorism and religious extremism depends on eliminating the root causes of these negative phenomena associated with social and economic problems within society. It is essential to jointly search for ways of addressing poverty issues, overcoming negative consequences of globalization, and resolving internal and regional conflicts. Actions based on force alone will not be able to uproot terrorism.

Regrettably, today, we witness the merging of terrorism with transnational organized crime and the drug trade, which gives rise to our shared and justifiable concern. Prevention of illicit drug

trafficking, which, to a certain extent, is the breeding ground for terrorism and international crime, should become part and parcel of our common struggle against terrorism. In this regard, I would like to reiterate Tajikistan's willingness to continue constructive dialogue and cooperation with the aim of establishing an effective global partnership for counteracting the narcotics threat.

An international conference dedicated to the tenth anniversary of the signing of the General Agreement on the Establishment of Peace and National Accord in Tajikistan was held in Dushanbe in June 2007, in cooperation with the United Nations. Almost simultaneously, the United Nations Tajikistan Office of Peacebuilding successfully concluded its activities. Moreover, for the first time, the citizens of my country joined international United Nations peacekeeping operations. These events provide convincing proof that the United Nations has the capacity to assist in reaching a peace and in ensuring further sustainable development in a country that has lived through serious internal conflict.

For Tajikistan, like for most United Nations Member States, the achievement of sustainable development is a high priority goal. Within the United Nations framework, much has been accomplished the world over in order to promote sustainable development and to alleviate poverty, epidemics, famine and illiteracy. Meanwhile, the implementation of a large-scale programme on the attainment of the Millennium Development Goals (MDGs) will require not only extra effort but also additional resources. Tajikistan's intention is to realize the greatest possible progress in the implementation of the MDGs. The main purpose of the National Strategy for Development of the Republic of Tajikistan up to the year 2015 and the Strategy for Poverty Reduction in Tajikistan for the years 2007-2009 is to ensure stable economic development and to provide a better standard of living for the country's population.

It is also obvious that the attainment of the MDGs, to a large extent, also depends on the attitude of the international community when it comes to rendering assistance to developing countries and on the timely mobilization of internal and external resources. With this in mind, Tajikistan joins the appeal addressed to the donor community to at least double the amount of assistance targeted for development. The proposal to pardon the debts incurred by developing countries in exchange for the implementation of national projects aimed at sustainable development remains equally important. In this connection, we attach much significance to the unification of efforts aimed at supporting sustainable financing for development, first and foremost, in the interests of attaining the MDGs. We are in favour of a joint search for effective and feasible development financing mechanisms. Partial writing off of debts could be equally important, since it would make it possible to invest liberated funds into education, environmental protection, combating HIV/AIDS and other MDGs.

Tajikistan wholeheartedly supports the creation of a mechanism of additional measures aimed at making further progress in the realization of the right to development, as enshrined in the Declaration on the Right to Development. Among the issues that should be regarded as associated with that right are the rational usage of natural resources for the purpose of development, provision for the well-being of the population and addressing the problems of poverty and unemployment.

In that connection, Tajikistan believes it has the right to develop the hydropower sector of the economy by building water reservoirs and dams on the major rivers of the country, because sustainable development, improved living standards of the population, achievement of the MDGs, the provision of reliable regulated irrigation water flows and an increased production of electrical energy depend on the availability of hydropower resources. Not only is the implementation of hydropower projects in Tajikistan extremely advantageous for the country itself, but it will also be able to influence favourably the sustainable development of the other States of the region. For instance, the completion of the construction of the Ragun hydropower station in Tajikistan alone will make it possible to supply an extra three million hectares of land with water in the neighbouring Central Asian states. Only an integrated approach towards the use of hydropower and other natural resources of the region, based on the principles of mutual understanding, assistance and trust among the States of the region, can ensure sustainable development in the region and promote a resolution of environmental problems, which are closely interconnected with the rational use of those resources.

Tajikistan is interested in getting support and establishing a partnership with countries and

international organizations in the field of renewable sources of energy and energy-efficient technologies, which help to reduce the usage of other traditional types of energy that negatively affect our climate and do enormous damage to the environment and to the future of humanity.

Tajikistan welcomes the High-Level Event on Climate Change held recently in New York and the forthcoming conference on the same subject to be held in Bali in December 2007.

Within the context of global warming, degradation of glaciers and the snow cover on the territories of Tajikistan and Kyrgyzstan, which are the upper watershed zones of Central Asia's rivers, has become an ever increasing concern for the Central Asian region. According to various sources, over the last 10 years the area of glaciers in Tajikistan has decreased by 30 to 35 per cent. Although supplying the population with drinking water is being discussed at the top level, and the fact that numerous declarations and other international instruments have already been adopted on this issue, the situation remains urgent. The solution of the problem requires further coordinated efforts on behalf of countries and international organizations. This problem is not only addressed in the Millennium Development Goals, but it is also ranked among those challenges that the world community encounters on a daily basis.

For this reason, the implementation of the International Decade for Action "Water for Life", proclaimed by the United Nations on the initiative of the Republic of Tajikistan, is regarded as even more timely and appropriate. As part of the Decade, the Government of Tajikistan has planned an international conference for 2008 in Dushanbe on water-related natural disasters, to be held in cooperation with United Nations agencies and other international organizations. Tajikistan hopes that all United Nations Member States will participate actively in this conference.

From time immemorial the water originating in Tajikistan has quenched the thirst of all nations of Central Asia and has irrigated the dry steppes of the region. However, it is obvious that the region has already been experiencing water-related difficulties that can become more aggravated on a yearly basis. To address this urgent problem, Tajikistan proposes to provide the Central Asian States with environmentally sound freshwater from Lake Sarez, which is located at a height of almost 3,300 metres above sea level and which could provide freshwater to half the population of Central Asia. The implementation of this initiative would make it possible to eliminate the real threat of an overflow of Lake Sarez, which could affect millions of people who reside in the downstream areas in neighbouring countries.

As for the development of trade and economic cooperation with other countries, the major challenge that Tajikistan is facing in this area is lack of access to the sea and other transportation and communication difficulties. For this reason, Tajikistan is committed to the decisions and recommendations outlined in the Almaty Programme of Action for transit transport cooperation, which addresses the special needs of landlocked developing countries to efficiently use the available transport infrastructure and to increase transit capacity in order to encourage development of trade and the advancement of investments in Central Asia.

The rehabilitation process in Afghanistan is creating favourable conditions for cooperation in the region in the implementation of transportation and communication projects aimed at gaining access to southern sea ports. The creation of new multi-optional transport corridors and the restoration of the Great Silk Road routes seek to establish a unified interconnected system of communications and to provide the Central Asian States with reliable access to promising markets. The August opening of the bridge across the Pyandj River between Tajikistan and Afghanistan was among the practical measures taken to achieve that goal.

The magnitude of the challenges facing the international community requires the further strengthening of our Organization. There is no doubt that all of us must do our utmost to make the United Nations even more effective in addressing current issues. For that reason, we believe that all of us must shoulder our responsibilities towards the Organization, in the interests of all Member States.

The President: I now call on His Excellency Mr. Claude Heller, chairman of the delegation of the United Mexican States.

Mr. Heller (Mexico) (*spoke in Spanish*): Permit me to express to you, Sir, my delegation's warm congratulations on your election to the presidency of the General Assembly at its sixty-second session. We are convinced that you will be able to skilfully guide our efforts to attain the common objectives that we

have set for the session. I should also like to express Mexico's gratitude for the excellent work of your predecessor, Sheikha Haya Rashed Al-Khalifa.

Likewise, I wish to express my gratitude to Secretary-General Ban Ki-moon for the work accomplished on major items on our agenda during the first months of his mandate. I also wish to congratulate him on the high-level event on climate change, held last week, which undoubtedly helped to raise awareness about an issue that deserves priority attention.

At a time when the international community is facing many challenges that test our capacity to fulfil the purposes enshrined in the Charter of the United Nations, it is essential to strengthen and make effective use of multilateral institutions. In that connection, the Organization must daily reaffirm itself as the indisputable centre for coexistence among States and the guarantor of compliance with international law. Mexico, as a founding Member of this pre-eminent universal forum, takes this opportunity to reaffirm its firm and decisive commitment to multilateralism.

We are living in a complex world situation characterized by armed conflicts of various sorts, including inter-ethnic conflicts that are not confined by borders; the commission of terrorist acts; the destabilizing activities of transnational organized crime; the proliferation of the arms race in all its aspects; and environmental degradation, situations of abject poverty, social exclusion and discrimination and pandemics affecting broad sectors of the world population. That is why, more than ever before, we need an Organization capable of meeting the needs of women and men throughout the world. In that context, we must think about the role of the United Nations.

Mexico sees three fundamental approaches for harmonizing relations among States and addressing the great challenges of our time: shared responsibility in the face of globalization, the promotion of human security for development and the responsibility to cooperate in the multilateral arena.

Every State is responsible, to its own society and to the international community, for guaranteeing the rule of law and the full enjoyment of human rights, promoting development, protecting the environment and countering new threats to security in order to provide the best possible living conditions for its people. The actions of the Government of Mexico at the internal level are based on those pillars so as to guarantee the rule of law throughout the national territory, given the onslaught of organized crime, and to reaffirm the authority of the State in the full exercise of its responsibilities.

The security of the population is not limited to the physical protection of individuals. That is why human security must be understood as a broad and integral concept that can meet the needs of society as a whole. It is a concept that includes elements ranging from strict respect for human rights and fundamental freedoms to adequate preparation of the population to deal with natural disasters or pandemics.

Mindful of the value of the individual, the Government of Mexico bases its activities on the quest for sustainable human development, which means seeking to promote the comprehensive development of individuals in all aspects — social, economic, political, cultural, human and environmental — and to do it in such a way as to ensure that future generations have opportunities to achieve well-being.

Within the framework of multilateral institutions, States have freely shouldered the obligation to cooperate with others in addressing all problems in areas such as, inter alia, combating drug trafficking and terrorism and preserving the environment, in which internal efforts alone are insufficient and concerted action is required.

Shared responsibility in the face of globalization, promoting human security for development and the responsibility to cooperate in the multilateral arena are among the main concerns of our Organization. A good example of this is climate change. As the Secretary-General himself has indicated, climate change is among the most serious, complex and multifaceted threats confronting the world. Mexico favours the multilateral climate change regime developed within the United Nations as an ideal framework for shaping commitments to be adopted in the near future. The United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change and the Kyoto Protocol are the appropriate areas for negotiation.

Emerging and developing countries must consider the fact that the costs of inaction of passivity in the face of climate change will be to the detriment of their own development efforts. We in Mexico have understood this. The national development plan 2007-2012 includes actions related to environmental

sustainability, with two specific objectives: reducing emissions of greenhouse gases and promoting measures to adapt to the effects of climate change. The inaction of others must not be a pretext for failing to do our part. We are convinced that shared but differentiated responsibilities must motivate all countries to take action to the best of their abilities and that developed countries, without exception, must contribute substantially to the collective effort in the technological and financial sphere.

Mexico believes that we must break away from the limitations of the Clean Development Mechanism of the Kyoto Protocol, whereby the achievement of developed countries' goals depends on their geographical location. What we need are positive incentives to supplement, not replace, the national efforts of developing countries. It is urgent that such incentives reward the efforts of beneficiary countries that make such efforts in their own interests. Accordingly, those that do more should receive greater support.

In recent years, the international community has had to face a series of challenges in the fight against terrorism. One of those challenges has been to guarantee the maintenance of international peace and security in the face of terrorism's evil effects without renouncing the universal and absolute values of human rights. That is an essential condition for civilized coexistence within and beyond our borders.

The United Nations has determined, in a number of commitments, that measures adopted by States to combat terrorism and to protect their citizens and provide adequate security for them must respect obligations undertaken in accordance with international law, in particular human rights norms, the rights of refugees and international humanitarian law.

Promoting and protecting human rights is one of the highest priorities for the Government of Mexico. We, the international community, have the responsibility to ensure universal and indivisible respect for human rights for all, regardless of the circumstances. Today, the situation in Myanmar demands our attention.

The creation of the Human Rights Council and the adoption of the institutional reform package, which includes the establishment of a universal periodic review mechanism, have marked a watershed in building a more just and equitable international system for human rights. Double standards in this area can no longer exist. With objectivity and in a spirit of cooperation, we must promote the evaluation of human rights in all Member States without any distinction. That effort strengthens the essential role of the Organization in developing international norms to protect human rights and represents the most solid foundation for achieving the well-being of our peoples.

In that regard, we welcome the recent adoption of the Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities and the United Nations Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples. Mexico remains open to scrutiny by treaty bodies and to special procedures on human rights, which have played an essential role in identifying the challenges our country still faces.

Given the multidimensional nature of international migration, Mexico believes that our Organization is the most fitting forum for dealing with these problems, on the basis of the principle of shared responsibility and of strengthening cooperation among States directly affected by that phenomenon. The issue of migration can in no way be limited solely to its State security aspects. We must have a comprehensive understanding based on respect for the human rights of all migrants, regardless of their legal status, taking into account the economic, social and cultural implications of the phenomenon.

We say this from our own experience. Mexico is a country of origin, transit and destination for migrants. For that reason, in addition to recognizing our own responsibility domestically, we must adopt effective measures to strengthen the international framework for the protection of migrants. The International Convention on the Protection of the Rights of All Migrant Workers and Members of Their Families is, without a doubt, a valuable reference point. While we recognize the need to cooperate in that area, Mexico is shouldering its own responsibility to create conditions so that our compatriots are able to find more and better opportunities within our country. That is why the Government of President Felipe Calderón is taking action on a number of fronts to promote public and private investment in order to develop programmes to create more jobs; to increase access to secondary and post-secondary education; to guarantee access to medical services, including in the most isolated and marginalized areas of the country; to ensure social security coverage; and to reduce inequality among our citizens.

It is clear that the success of our development policies requires a favourable international economic environment and cooperation among States. The United Nations is playing an essential role in providing technical assistance and monitoring the implementation of commitments undertaken by the international community at the major conferences, summits and forums sponsored by the Organization.

Seven years from the date set for the achievement of the Millennium Development Goals, we note with concern that while significant progress has been achieved in some areas of the world, in other areas there are still delays and even steps backward. We recognize that each country is responsible for its own development. However, national efforts must be accompanied by international action based on the global alliance forged at the International Conference on Financing for Development, held in Monterrey, Mexico. That will ensure complementarity between national strategies and the development of the world economy. Mexico hopes that the Economic and Social Council's new Development Cooperation Forum and the international review conference on the Monterrey Consensus to be held in Doha in 2008 will be steps in that direction.

International security requires renewed commitments. Although there has been a numerical reduction in nuclear arsenals since the end of the cold war, it is disturbing to see the growing sophistication of related technology. Unfortunately, that points to a new phase in the arms race. Mexico is convinced that the only guarantee against the use of nuclear weapons is a progressive reduction aimed at their complete elimination and the certainty that they will never be produced again. As one of the initial steps for achieving nuclear disarmament, the Comprehensive Nuclear-Test-Ban Treaty must enter into force as soon as possible. Mexico also believes that the vital strengthening of the non-proliferation regime requires the fulfilment of obligations undertaken by all States, nuclear and non-nuclear, under the Treaty on the Non-Proliferation of Nuclear Weapons (NPT), with a view to its universalization. If no progress is achieved on non-proliferation or disarmament, fear, mistrust and greater insecurity will prevail. In this regard, the NPT review conference to be held in 2010 is a new opportunity for safeguarding and strengthening these objectives.

We welcome the agreements recently reached with the Democratic People's Republic of Korea. We are convinced that the ongoing controversy over nuclear matters in the case of the Islamic Republic of Iran must be resolved through diplomacy and strict compliance with commitments undertaken within the framework of the International Atomic Energy Agency.

Mexico supports the resolution of conflicts in various regions through dialogue, negotiations and full respect for international law. That is particularly true in dealing with the most critical items on the United Nations agenda.

We are following with particular attention recent developments on various aspects of the situation in the Middle East and their impact on international stability. We support efforts aimed at a new peace process between Israel and Palestine, convinced that a final solution can be achieved only through negotiation between the parties with the active support of the international community. We hope that in the very near future the State of Israel and a politically and economically viable Palestinian State can coexist within secure and internationally recognized borders, in accordance with the relevant Security Council resolutions.

If multilateralism has returned, it is now up to States to show the political will necessary to promote concrete reform, ranging from adjusting the Security Council to meet the needs of our time to ensuring greater coherence in action to promote sustainable development. The response to the institutional crisis of recent years does not lie in alternative mechanisms or unilateral or partial approaches, but rather, we must give the Organization the necessary tools to carry out its responsibilities effectively.

Mexico believes that expanding the Security Council is an unavoidable necessity in order to make that body more representative. In this regard, my Government favours increasing the number of non-permanent members, with the possibility of being re-elected in order to promote accountability. We believe that any other formula will highlight existing inequalities.

Mexico is the tenth largest contributor to this Organization and a country loyal to the cause of the United Nations. We are committed to its reform and ready to shoulder greater responsibilities on the international scene. In line with this vision, Mexico has

submitted its candidacy for a non-permanent seat on the Security Council for the 2009-2010 period.

The Government of Mexico has expressed its political will to constructively participate in the work of the Council in the areas of maintaining international peace and security and dealing with questions on the world agenda that are within the purview of the Council.

On this basis, Mexico reaffirms its determination to actively contribute to building a more secure, democratic and equitable international society.

The President: I now give the floor to His Excellency Mr. Philip Sealy, chairman of the delegation of the Republic of Trinidad and Tobago.

Mr. Sealy (Trinidad and Tobago): I wish to take this opportunity to congratulate you most sincerely on your election as President of the General Assembly at its sixty-second session. My delegation is confident that your in-depth knowledge of international economic and political issues, complemented by your extensive diplomatic experience, will serve you in good stead to guide our deliberations effectively in the coming months.

I also wish to take this opportunity to express Trinidad and Tobago's deep appreciation for the leadership of your predecessor, Her Excellency Sheikha Haya Rashed Al-Khalifa, the first Arab woman to hold that lofty position. As President of the General Assembly, her efforts contributed to focusing the attention of the international community on the pressing challenges of climate change, inter alia, thereby facilitating, in the process, global awareness and increased support for internationally agreed action on this issue given its impact on our planet and, especially, on the very survival of several small island developing States.

I consider this occasion opportune, as well, to convey Trinidad and Tobago's unequivocal support for our current Secretary-General His Excellency Mr. Ban Ki-moon. We commend his leadership role in the troubling humanitarian crisis in the Darfur region of the Sudan and applaud his initiative to convene the High-Level Event on Climate Change. These are indeed apt demonstrations of his willingness to confront forcefully and resolutely issues of transcendental importance to the present and future well-being of peoples everywhere.

Though small in size and population, Trinidad and Tobago, through visionary leadership, transparency and public accountability and prudent management of our natural resources, is continuing along a path of sustainable development. Our development strategy seeks to go beyond the achievement of the Millennium Development Goals (MDGs) and to ensure that by the year 2020 all sectors of our multi-ethnic and multicultural society will enjoy a standard of living comparable to that of the developed world.

The performance of our economy draws its strength from vertically integrated and well-developed energy and petrochemical industries, which are complemented by buoyant and competitive manufacturing and service sectors, including financial services and tourism, as well as by the ongoing transformation of the agricultural sector. All these factors provide the basis for economic growth levels off 8.6 per cent over the last five years and a recorded rate of 12 per cent in 2006. We have also been able to achieve a 7 per cent reduction in poverty from a high of 24 per cent in 1998 and are currently experiencing a low unemployment rate of 5.9 per cent.

It is on the basis of this strong economic performance that Trinidad and Tobago has continued its commitment to the Caribbean Community (CARICOM), as we seek to advance the integration process, moving from the current stage of the single market to that of a single economy. Effective participation in this process of furthering strengthening and deepening the regional integration movement remains a major foreign policy goal of the Government of the Republic of Trinidad and Tobago. It is for this reason and given the fact that our economic fortunes are inextricably linked, that Trinidad and Tobago continues to provide economic and humanitarian assistance to several CARICOM countries adversely affected by natural disasters.

Our further economic development and that of the global community as a whole, is dependent on the existence of global peace and security. In this regard, the Security Council has continued to take timely decisions on global crises in different parts of the globe, on terrorism and on nuclear non-proliferation.

The reform of that principal organ of the United Nations, charged with maintaining international peace and security, continues, however, to elude us. It is time to engage in bona fide negotiations on this matter. The

status quo is unacceptable. The Security Council must be reformed to reflect the current geopolitical realities of the twenty-first century and no longer the world as it was in the aftermath of World War II. New and important actors from Africa, Asia and Latin America and the Caribbean are a part of today's global reality. An expanded and enhanced Security Council would provide the Council with even greater legitimacy and support in the carrying out of its Charter responsibilities. Trinidad and Tobago is of the view that much progress was made during the sixty-first session and the political momentum which was generated there should not be lost.

A reinvigorated Security Council is needed to address the major issues that continue to bedevil contemporary international relations. In the Middle East, the failure to move forward on the peace process has set back global efforts to achieve a just, lasting and comprehensive peace in the Middle East. The Palestinian people have yet to exercise their legitimate rights to self-determination and to the establishment of an independent Palestinian State in an undivided homeland.

We call on the Quartet to resume the Road Map process for peace in the Middle East, so that the world can, in the foreseeable future, see two States, Israel and Palestine, living side by side in peace, within internationally recognized and secure borders. Additionally, internationally acceptable solutions must be found to address the fate of the Palestinian refugees, the status of Jerusalem and the issue of Israeli settlements in the West Bank. All these matters have remained pending for far too long and the Palestinians should no longer be denied the realization of their statehood.

While there has been little or no progress in the matter of peace in the Middle East, the Government of the Republic of Trinidad and Tobago is pleased to note that, with respect to the humanitarian crisis in the Darfur region of the Sudan, agreement has finally been reached, which has resulted in the deployment of a hybrid United Nations-African Union peacekeeping force for Darfur. We welcome this positive development. While we hope that the hybrid United Nations-African Union peacekeeping force will bring peace and stability to the region and enable humanitarian relief to flow once again to where it is most urgently required, all our efforts must now be turned towards putting a cease-fire in place and striving to have all the rebels groups fighting in Darfur move towards a peace arrangement with the Sudanese Government. Peace and justice are, however, inextricably linked and there can be no lasting peace in Darfur without accountability for the heinous crimes committed against the people of Darfur during the conflict.

While international political and security developments continue to pose major difficulties for the international community, developments in the area of international trade give rise to even greater concern. We are mindful of the reality that the steadfast efforts of Trinidad and Tobago, of the subregion and of other developing countries to confront effectively the challenges of globalization and liberalization would be rendered futile in the absence of a fair, transparent and equitable international economic trading system. The Government of Trinidad and Tobago therefore remains deeply concerned that, after many years of protracted negotiations characterized by many missed deadlines, the Doha Round of multilateral trade negotiations has yet to reach a compromise that would pave the way for an agreed outcome, particularly in the areas of agriculture and industrial products, and that incorporates the development dimension. We underscore the importance of ensuring that the principle of special and differential treatment is truly reflected throughout the negotiating modalities, and we call upon all parties in the negotiations to take fully into account the special needs of small and vulnerable economies.

The Government of the Republic of Trinidad and Tobago fully expects that the negotiations will resume in good faith and that there will be commensurate progress in agriculture, industrial products and all other areas of the negotiations, in keeping with the mandate of a single undertaking. That will ensure the successful conclusion of the Round and an outcome that fully reflects the commitment undertaken at Doha to put development at the heart of the multilateral trading system.

While those trade negotiations seem to have stalled and will require the injection of a high degree of political will to bring them to a successful conclusion, the international community is faced with yet another global concern in the form of climate change. As a result of greenhouse gas emissions from fossil fuel use and land-use changes through deforestation, the world is already destined to an

increase of 1.14 degrees Celsius by the end of the next two decades.

There therefore needs to be a clearly defined global mitigation strategy that keeps the long-term temperature increase at less than 2 degrees Celsius above pre-industrial levels. Increases over 2 degrees Celsius are very likely to have an increased adverse impact on small island developing States, such as Trinidad and Tobago. In order to avoid a global climate disaster, the Government of the Republic of Trinidad and Tobago calls for urgent and ambitious action by all States in accordance with their common but differentiated responsibilities, respective capabilities and social and economic conditions.

As a State party to the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change (UNFCCC) and the Kyoto Protocol, we call on all States parties to UNFCCC, particularly major emitters of greenhouse gases, to agree at Bali to launch negotiations on a post-2012 regime. In those negotiations, the Government of Trinidad and Tobago and other like-minded Caribbean Community (CARICOM) member States will seek to achieve substantial and legally binding emission reductions in the shortest timeframe possible and significant increases in the level of resources available to developing countries, in particular small island developing States, to assist them in adapting to the adverse effects of climate change. To this end, the Government of the Republic of Trinidad and Tobago has already made a voluntary contribution of $1 million to the trust fund for the Caribbean Community Climate Change Centre in Belize to strengthen that institution, so that it can assist CARICOM member States in implementing their adaptation strategies to deal with the adverse effects of climate change.

But we in the Caribbean are not only concerned about global warming and its adverse effects on Caribbean States. We are also deeply interested in preserving the marine environment of the Caribbean Sea, which is an important natural resource for all its littoral island and continental States, given their varying degrees of dependence on tourism. The passage through the Caribbean Sea of ships carrying radioactive waste is an issue to which all CARICOM Governments attach the highest importance. Allow me to take this opportunity to reiterate the continued objection of Caribbean countries against the use of the Caribbean Sea for the trans-shipment of radioactive waste. The repeated scientific and safety reports may offer some reassurance, but they do very little to appease our concern.

Our Prime Minister, Mr. Patrick Manning, in his 2008 budget statement, brought into sharp focus the vision of the Government of the Republic of Trinidad and Tobago for our cosmopolitan society. He emphasized that the mission in which we as a nation are engaged collectively is a transformation process aimed at bringing sustained prosperity and the requisite higher quality of life to every individual, family and community across the country. The Government has therefore sought to give concrete expression to the national quest for a highly competitive, productive, innovative and caring society, in which all are encouraged to attain their highest potential and are facilitated in doing so.

It is, accordingly, in this spirit that we have just signed the Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities, which was adopted and opened for signature during the sixty-first session of the General Assembly, and we will take steps to ratify the Convention once the necessary implementing legislation is put in place to complement what is already provided for in our domestic policy with regard to persons with disabilities.

It is this confidence in and respect for the international rule of law that has encouraged Trinidad and Tobago to campaign, since the late 1980s and at the highest political levels, for the establishment of an International Criminal Court (ICC). We are keenly aware of the important strides being made by ICC, as it devotes its attention to the prosecution of individuals accused of committing the crimes within its jurisdiction, namely, genocide, war crimes and crimes against humanity.

Trinidad and Tobago recalls in this connection the adoption at the Rome Diplomatic Conference of a resolution recommending that a conference to review the Court's Statute also consider the inclusion of trafficking in illegal drugs on an international scale as being within the Court's jurisdiction. We must seize the opportunity now forced upon us by international trends to fully engage ICC in efforts to stem the tide of that scourge, and similarly, to consider the inclusion of acts of terrorism, once that term is clearly defined by the international community.

Our approach will be grounded in the recognition of the continued deleterious effects that the international trade in illegal drugs is having on the social fabric of societies the world over, including in the Caribbean. The time has come for the international community to recognize the illicit trafficking of drugs as an international crime subject to the jurisdiction of ICC.

Another area of public international law to which Trinidad and Tobago attaches the utmost importance is the 1982 United Nations Convention on the Law of the Sea. This year's meeting of the United Nations Open-ended Informal Consultative Process on Oceans and the Law of the Sea addressed the important issue of marine genetic resources. Part XI of the Convention explicitly provides that the area beyond national jurisdiction and its resources are the common heritage of mankind. Trinidad and Tobago is accordingly of the view that any legal regime developed to regulate the marine genetic resources of the Area must be guided by the common heritage principle. Adherence to such a principle would ensure that the resources of the Area are exploited for the benefit of all members of the international community, and not just for the benefit of those with the financial wherewithal and the technical know-how.

Similarly, we recognize that all States parties to the Convention are ipso facto members of the International Seabed Authority. Despite the importance of the current work of the Authority on polymetallic sulphides and cobalt crusts, many States parties fail to attend the annual sessions of the Authority held in Jamaica. The continued absence of States undermines the common heritage principle laid down in Part XI of the Convention and threatens the very legitimacy of the work of the Authority. We accordingly call on all members of the Authority to attend regularly the sessions of the Authority and thus assist it in adopting regulations governing the exploration and exploitation of the mineral resources in the Area, which are of benefit to all mankind.

Trinidad and Tobago, like its Caribbean neighbours, acknowledges its maternal links to Africa and notes that 2007 was an important year for the peoples of that continent and for the African diaspora worldwide. Earlier this year, we observed here at Headquarters and in the capitals of all CARICOM States a programme of activities intended to raise the consciousness of peoples the world over regarding the horrors of the transatlantic slave trade and the deleterious effects it had on Africa, depriving that continent of millions of its inhabitants, and on people of African descent in the Americas. We in Trinidad and Tobago have used the opportunity to educate all of our citizens on the degrading treatment to which those human beings were subjected and to demonstrate that, notwithstanding our history of slavery, followed by the indentureship of other segments of our population, the people of Trinidad and Tobago have developed a harmonious cosmopolitan society, which is an accomplishment worthy of emulation in other parts of the globe that are fractured by fratricidal ethnic and religious struggles.

In order for the suffering of millions of enslaved Africans not to have been in vain, the Government of the Republic of Trinidad and Tobago intends to make a financial contribution to the CARICOM initiative for a permanent memorial to be erected within these hallowed walls of the United Nations in remembrance of all those who perished in the Middle Passage and on the plantations in the New World in their struggle for freedom and liberation from the yoke of slavery. We call upon the international community to contribute generously to such a worthwhile and historic venture.

In conclusion, the United Nations remains a centre for harmonizing the goals and aspirations of all mankind. There is no other universal forum with greater legitimacy or a more suitable mandate to bring about an improvement in the human condition. We must address all these global issues with firmness of purpose and in a resolute manner if we are to save coming generations from the adverse consequences of war, underdevelopment and poverty, as well as the deleterious effects of climate change, and to ensure that all humanity can enjoy improved standards of living in freedom and in dignity on a habitable planet.

The President: I now give the floor to His Excellency Mr. Joe Robert Pemagbi, chairman of the delegation of the Republic of Sierra Leone.

Mr. Pemagbi (Sierra Leone): The Sierra Leone delegation would like to join others in congratulating you, Mr. President, on your election to preside over the work of the General Assembly at this session. We also take this opportunity to commend your predecessor for her contribution to the work of the Assembly, in particular for her initiatives in the ongoing process of the United Nations reform.

Allow me to convey to you, the Secretary-General and this Assembly greetings from the newly elected President of Sierra Leone, His Excellency Ernest Bai Koroma, who took the oath of office just two weeks ago. President Koroma was not able to come to this debate because of time constraints.

Sierra Leone would like to reaffirm its commitment to the United Nations as the only international body that has the capacity to combat the multifarious problems of the world. The salvation of the world from conflict, natural disasters, diseases, hunger, poverty, oppression, abuse and violation of rights and the menace of climate change, and the achievement of our development goals will remain distant dreams without multilateral action. The stronger our United Nations, the greater our chances to realize the objectives for which we set it up. That is why Sierra Leone will never relent in its support for the reform process of the United Nations to enable it to respond appropriately to its numerous, diverse and ever-increasing challenges.

The reform exercise has scored some major successes, but the most critical and contentious reform — that of the Security Council — remains elusive. As long as the status quo is maintained, Africa will remain disadvantaged, as the only continent without a voice of permanent representation on the Council. We therefore urge a speedy consideration of the expansion of, and equitable representation on, the Council, to make it more representative, democratic and accountable and therefore more effective.

A new dawn has broken in the political landscape of Sierra Leone. Once again, Sierra Leone has demonstrated exemplary performance in the area of the consolidation of democracy and governance. We would like to acknowledge with humility the messages of commendation we received from various parts of the world for the conduct of the recent parliamentary and presidential elections. As one influential Western media organization put it, Sierra Leone is a pearl in the political crown of African politics.

My delegation welcomes the statement issued by the members of the Security Council in which they congratulated the people and institutions of Sierra Leone, in particular the National Electoral Commission and the Sierra Leone Police, on their conduct in the election period and the commitment they demonstrated to the democratic process. President Koroma has asked me to convey, on behalf of all Sierra Leoneans, sincere thanks to members of the international community for their invaluable contribution to the electoral process. We are grateful in particular for the logistical support that the various institutions concerned with the election received to enable them to perform their respective functions. As the new President said after taking the oath of office, the people of Sierra Leone must congratulate themselves for their historic resolve to ensure the victory of democracy and the free exercise of the will of the people.

No one can deny that, after a brutal civil war, Sierra Leone has enjoyed five years of relative peace. However, peace is not an event. It transcends the signing of ceasefire and peace agreements. It also transcends the successful disarmament and demobilization of ex-combatants, and the official declaration of the end of armed conflict.

Peace is a process, a process that must be consolidated, maintained and sustained. Indeed, that is why the United Nations was established after two world wars: to promote social progress and better standards of life for the peoples of the world and to unite our strength in order to maintain international peace and security. The establishment of the new Peacebuilding Commission to facilitate post-conflict recovery is consistent with the objectives of the Organization. It adds to the true meaning and scope of the concept of peace.

The Sierra Leone Government considers the recent elections as part of the peace process. The people have once again exercised their constitutional right to choose the men and women they would like to serve the nation. Now we must not forget that the people also have a right to economic and social development. The right to vote is inextricably linked to the rights to food, clean and portable water, basic social services and, of course, development. All the praise, all the commendation that Sierra Leoneans have received in connection with the exercise of their political right, the right to vote, will be meaningless unless we create and intensify our collective efforts to ensure that they see and enjoy the dividends of that process.

Periodic elections are important, but they are not a panacea for all needs. Now that the elections are over, the Government is determined to meet the challenge of translating the exercise of a political right

into the realization of the economic and social rights of all Sierra Leoneans. There is indeed a change of Government, but that change needs urgent and substantial support to produce its desired dividends for the citizens. Accordingly, I would like to solicit the support of the United Nations, the entire international community and our bilateral partners to help us to deliver on the expectations linked to that change.

Sierra Leone will continue to have high expectations for the United Nations, including its Peacebuilding Commission and Peacebuilding Fund. Sierra Leone was selected as one of the first two countries on the Commission's agenda, and thus became eligible for funding, which has already had a positive impact on our ability to consolidate the peace. We thank the Commission and the Fund for that timely consideration. We note with appreciation, for instance, the timely support that the Sierra Leone Police received from the Peacebuilding Fund to enhance their capacity to manage public order during the recent elections.

The four priority areas that have been identified by the Government in consultation with the Commission, the United Nations system in Sierra Leone and other stakeholders, including civil society, are still valid. They are all equally important. However, in view of the inherent urgency and the critical nature of the youth problem, the Government will make sure, as far as possible, that youth employment and empowerment continue to be accorded first priority.

We hope that the details of the integrated peacebuilding strategy or framework for cooperation with Sierra Leone will soon be finalized. While recognizing the importance of partnership and accountability, we strongly believe that national ownership must be the core principle of the framework.

While Sierra Leoneans are being showered with commendations for the outcome of the elections, and deservedly so, and while the nation is today being held in high esteem in the area of political and constitutional order, we must not forget that the country still finds itself in the unenviable position of being ranked one of the least developed countries in the United Nations Development Programme's human development index. Unfortunately for Sierra Leone and the rest of the developing world, the prospects for achieving the Millennium Development Goals (MDGs) by the year 2015 remain cloudy and distant. My delegation shares the view that practical steps must be taken as a matter of urgency to accelerate the process of meeting the goals. We therefore welcome the recent launching of the MDG Africa Steering Group, chaired by Secretary-General Ban Ki-moon, to mobilize the heads of the United Nations system and major multilateral and intergovernmental organizations in support of African States in their effort to meet the MDGs.

In principle, we support all initiatives that could at least get Africa on track. Those include Prime Minister Gordon Brown's MDG call to action of last July, and the declaration signed by a number of Heads of State and Government and private-sector leaders. We, for our part, acknowledge our responsibility to meet the Goals. However, we strongly believe that the developed countries should fulfil their commitments as partners in an interdependent world, with special support preference for countries emerging from conflict, in order to accelerate their progress towards meeting the goals.

Sierra Leone will continue to foster and maintain friendly relations with all Members States of the United Nations, in particular those in our immediate neighbourhood, members of the Mano River Union and the Economic Community of West African States (ECOWAS). That is why, less than a week after assuming office, President Koroma paid a visit to the two other founding members of the Mano River Union, Liberia and Guinea, and to Burkina Faso, the current Chair of ECOWAS.

For far too long, the situation in some of our countries has been a threat to regional and international peace and security. Sierra Leone would like to assure this Assembly that it stands ready to reverse that trend in the subregion of West Africa, to help reduce tension, prevent armed conflict and strengthen institutions and machinery that have been created primarily to promote the economic and social well-being of people.

We will continue to work assiduously with the United Nations, the African Union, ECOWAS, the European Union and individual sovereign States to pursue the goals of peace and security enshrined in the Charter of the United Nations, for Africa and the rest of the world.

The President: We have heard the last speaker in the general debate.

As we conclude the annual general debate, I would like to thank all participants for their insightful contributions. The presence of almost 100 heads of State or Government and approximately 80 Ministers for Foreign Affairs is a mark of the importance the world places on this unique Assembly.

Beyond the general debate, there has been a flurry of diplomatic activity, including many high-level events convened by the Secretary-General. We have increased our visibility and the public and media have responded positively. I am grateful that speakers directly addressed the five priority topics that I set out, and that they pointed the way forward. I am also grateful to those leaders who spared the time to discuss those priorities with me in more detail. With that mandate, I intend to work closely with all of you to achieve the results that your heads of delegation have called for.

The latest reports on the accelerated melting of the Arctic have unnerved the experts. We need to be on high alert. Responding to the challenge of climate change, we have sent a strong political message that the time for talk has passed and the time for action has begun. I believe an important shift has taken place. Climate change has become the flagship issue of the sixty-second session.

There was overwhelming consensus that, in adapting to global warming, we must not set limits to growth but rather help achieve sustainable development. We all agreed that we have common but differentiated responsibilities and there was, and rightly so, broad consensus that the United Nations must remain at the centre of the process to reach a global agreement, including to strengthen international environmental governance.

Many speakers also presented commendable initiatives: to reduce deforestation and emissions; to invest in flood prevention and food security; to introduce tougher energy efficiency standards; to mobilize private sector investment in clean technologies; to improve carbon-trading mechanisms; and to accelerate technology and resource transfers.

The idea of a road map to coordinate the United Nations system on climate change and to complement national efforts was endorsed by many. Given the urgency of the many calls for action, it is now up to Member States to deliver in Bali.

Overwhelming support to make quicker progress on the Millennium Development Goals (MDGs) was expressed by leaders from all regions. Many of the Goals are off track, but in sub-Saharan Africa we may not achieve a single Goal by 2015. That is indeed an emergency situation.

Many developing countries set out domestic initiatives and new international partnerships to boost economic growth; to empower women and children; to provide better access to drugs to treat HIV/AIDS, malaria and other diseases. But many speakers also recognized that a gap remains between promises and delivery on aid, trade and domestic reforms. Achieving the MDGs requires a global partnership, with everyone fulfilling their part of the compact. I am therefore grateful that many participants supported convening an MDG leaders' meeting this session. We must demonstrate by our actions that we can and will achieve the Goals.

It was also evident that many delegations want to see further progress on financing for development as we move towards the 2008 Doha conference. Many also pointed out the significance of concluding a global deal on trade for reducing poverty. We must press ahead during the existing Round, as many agree the current system is not sustainable.

Terrorism in all forms was strongly condemned. There was strong support to ensure full implementation of the United Nations Global Counter-Terrorism Strategy and a broad desire for swift progress on a convention. In that context, many also emphasized the need to overcome ignorance and prejudice through a sustained dialogue among cultures and civilizations.

On the eve of the sixtieth anniversary of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights, many reaffirmed the importance of the promotion and protection of human rights for all. While some addressed the shortcomings of the Human Rights Council, many also called for its strengthening in order that it might live up to its full potential.

In that context, reference was also made to the importance of adherence to international law, human security and the responsibility to protect, all of those being complementary to sustainable development, peace and security.

A wide range of issues regarding peace and security were raised. We have taken some small, but

concrete, steps in ongoing efforts towards sustainable political solutions in the Middle East, Iraq, Afghanistan, and Darfur. Concerns were also expressed about recent events in Myanmar.

Positive developments were reported in a number of post-conflict countries. In that regard, some delegations noted the positive contribution that United Nations peacekeepers had made, while others stressed the need to strengthen the capacity of the Peacebuilding Commission.

There were calls for improved progress on disarmament, including concluding an arms trade treaty, and for advancing non-proliferation.

The idea of fairer migration policies was mentioned, and some raised the issue of growing links between organized crime, human trafficking and drugs.

There is overall agreement that we could make faster progress on all those issues, if our multilateral institutions better reflected contemporary realities, underlining the need for improved progress on United Nations reform.

The Secretariat must be more effective, efficient and accountable to Member States, and some speakers put forward initiatives to achieve this. Resources throughout the United Nations system must be mobilized and delivered more coherently on the ground.

We heard from countries engaged in and supporting the "One United Nations" approach that they are already seeing better results while others spoke in favour of strengthening the gender architecture.

There was wide-ranging support for concrete results on Security Council reform, including through intergovernmental negotiations.

The General Assembly is the only forum where we can tackle many of those issues comprehensively. It is therefore incumbent on us to revitalize this House by taking the necessary decisions on the priorities and challenges that have been outlined. At the opening of the general debate, I suggested that we could better achieve that goal if the General Assembly were more interactive. I am grateful that members delivered. Let us continue in this spirit tomorrow at the High-level Dialogue on Interreligious and Intercultural Understanding and Peace and throughout the sixty-second session.

May I take it that it is the wish of the General Assembly to conclude its consideration of agenda item 8?

It was so decided.

The meeting rose at 1.45 p.m.